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ABSTRACT

This publication, a resource for board of education presidents in the State of New Jersey, covers a wide range of topics pertaining to the board president's duties. Separate sections are devoted to the following: (1) the code of ethics for New Jersey board members; (2) statutory responsibilities of a board of education president; (3) an opinion essay entitled "The Antileadership Vaccine," contending that the American education system discourages intellectually gifted people from seeking leadership positions; (4) decision making; (5) conducting the board meeting; (6) understanding parliamentary procedure; (7) the board president as policy leader; (8) 10 questions to pry apart a district's curriculum; (9) reevaluating courses for the comprehensive high school; (10) evaluation of the chief school administrator; (11) chief school administrator job description; (12) progress toward objectives; (13) self-evaluation--a major board responsibility; (14) the process of board self-evaluation; (15) the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) board self-evaluation questionnaire; (16) legislation and the role of the board member; (17) the board president and labor relations; (18) board meetings as a district showcase; (19) designing the program--goals, objectives, and procedures; (20) a suggested statement of policy on school-community relations; (21) suggested objectives and procedures for developing a public relations program; (22) dealing with the press during a crisis; and (23) the NJSBA Field Services Department. (TE)

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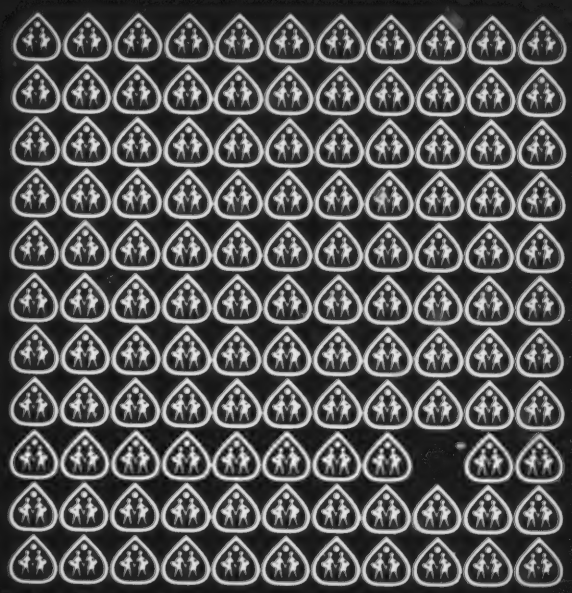

HANDBOOK OF EFFECTIVE BOARD LEADERSHIP

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Edited by: Toby R. Simon

New Jersey School Boards Association
413 West State Street
Trenton, New Jersey 08605-0909

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Foreword

The presidents of boards of education have a difficult and important role to play in the operation of a school district. They have few powers beyond those of other board members, yet must ensure that board meetings run smoothly, are well organized, cover those topics which are necessary to the continued operation of the schools, and meet all legal and contractual requirements.

Agendas must be developed which include the needs of the chief school administrator and the board. Appointments must be made for board committees or state-wide obligations. Efforts must be made to involve all board members in the decision making process, while ensuring that decisions are made on a timely basis. And care must be taken that necessary policies are formulated while leaving administration of the schools to those hired for the job.

It is our hope that this publication will serve as a resource to you during your term as board president and that you will refer to it whenever questions come up in the areas covered.

New Jersey School Board Member Code of Ethics

1. I will uphold and enforce all laws, state board rules and regulations, and court orders pertaining to schools. Desired changes should be brought about only through legal and ethical procedures.
2. I will make decisions in terms of the educational welfare of children and will seek to develop and maintain public schools which meet the individual needs of all children regardless of their ability, race, creed, sex, or social standing.
3. I will confine my board action to policymaking, planning and appraisal, and I will help to frame policies and plans only after the board has consulted those who will be affected by them.
4. I will carry out my responsibility, not to administer the schools, but, together with my fellow board members, to see that they are well run.
5. I will recognize that authority rests with the board of education and will make no personal promises nor take any private action which may compromise the board.
6. I will refuse to surrender my independent judgment to special interest or partisan political groups or to use the schools for personal gain or for the gain of friends.
7. I will hold confidential all matters pertaining to the schools, which, if disclosed, would needlessly injure individuals or the schools. But, in all other matters, I will provide accurate information and, in concert with my fellow board members, interpret to the staff the aspirations of the community for its schools.
8. I will vote to appoint the best qualified personnel available after consideration of the recommendation of the chief administrative officer.
9. I will support and protect school personnel in proper performance of their duties.
10. I will refer all complaints to the chief administrative officer and will act on such complaints at public meetings only after failure of an administrative solution.

May 10, 1975, Delegate Assembly, New Jersey School Boards Association

Statutory Responsibilities of a Board of Education President

N.J.S.A. 18A:6-20

A board president may issue subpoenas, "if the hearing is to be held before such board. . ."

N.J.S.A. 18A:19-1

A board president shall sign warrants for the expenditure of funds within requirements as listed in this statute.

N.J.S.A. 18A:19-4

A board president shall sign for payment of claims and demands against the board within requirements as listed in this statute, ". . . unless otherwise provided by Board resolution."

N.J.S.A. 18A:24-32

Bond obligations issued for Type II districts must contain the manual or facsimile signature of the board president or vice president, within requirements as listed in this statute.

N.J.S.A. 18A:25-6

A board president may approve suspension of an assistant superintendent, principal, or teacher, as recommended by the superintendent, pending the next meeting of the board of education.

N.J.S.A. 18A:26-9

A board president may administer the oath of allegiance and office to applicants for certificates or renewal of certificates to teach or supervise in any public school within requirements as listed in this statute.

N.J.A.C. 6:3-1.9

A board president may request of the board secretary that a special meeting be called. (A majority of the whole membership of the board may also request the calling of a special meeting by signed petition to the board secretary.)

N.J.S.A. 18A:15-1

A board president serves for one year and until the election and qualification of his/her successor.

N.J.S.A. 18A:15-2 and 18A:11-1

A board president shall perform the duties of his/her office as specified in the law and in the local board's rules of governance, subject to removal by a majority of the full board for failure to do so.

The Antileadership Vaccine

John W. Gardner

It is generally believed that we need enlightened and responsible leaders—at every level and in every phase of our national life. Everyone says so. But the nature of leadership in our society is very imperfectly understood, and many of the public statements about it are utter nonsense.

This is unfortunate because there are serious issues of leadership facing this society, and we had better understand them.

The Dispersion of Power:

The most fundamental thing to be said about leadership in the United States is also the most obvious. We have gone as far as any known society in creating a leadership system that is not based on caste or class, not even on wealth. There is not yet equal access to leadership (witness the remaining barriers facing women and Negroes), but we have come a long, long way from the family or class-based leadership group. Even with its present defects, ours is a relatively open system.

The most important thing to be said is that leadership is dispersed among a great many groups in our society. The President, of course, has a unique, and uniquely important, leadership role, but beneath him, fragmentation is the rule. This idea is directly at odds with the notion that the society is run by a coherent power group—the Power Elite, as C. Wright Mills called it, or the Establishment, as later writers have named it. It is hard not to believe that such a group exists. Foreigners find it particularly difficult to believe in the reality of the fluid, scattered, shifting leadership that is visible to the naked eye. The real leadership, they imagine, must be behind the scenes. But at a national level this simply isn't so.

In many local communities and even in some states there *is* a coherent power group, sometimes behind the scenes, sometimes out in the open. In communities where such an "establishment," that is, a coherent ruling group, exists, the leading citizen can be thought of as having power in a generalized sense: he can bring about a change in zoning ordinances, influence the location of a new factory, and determine whether the local museum will buy contemporary paintings. But in the dispersed and fragmented power system that prevails in the nation as a whole one cannot say "So-and-so is powerful," without further elaboration. Those who know how our system works always want to know, "Powerful in what way? Powerful to accomplish what?" We have leaders in business and leaders in government, military leaders and educational leaders, leaders in labor and in agriculture, leaders in science, in the world of art, and in many other special fields. As a rule, leaders in any one of these fields do not recognize the authority of leaders from a neighboring field. Often they don't even know one another, nor do they particularly want to. Mutual suspicion is about as common as mutual respect—and a lot more common than mutual cooperation in manipulating society's levers.

Most of the significant issues in our society are settled by a balancing of forces. A lot of people and groups are involved and the most powerful do not always win. Sometimes a coalition of the less powerful wins. Sometimes an individual of very limited power gets himself into the position of casting the deciding ballot.

Not only are there apt to be many groups involved in any critical issue, but their relative strength varies with each issue that comes up. A group that is powerful today may not be powerful next year. A group that can cast a decisive vote on question A may not even be listened to when question B comes up.

The Nature of Leadership:

People who have never exercised power have all kinds of curious ideas about it. The

popular notion of top leadership is a fantasy of capricious power: the top man presses a button and something remarkable happens; he gives an order as the whim strikes him, and it is obeyed.

Actually, the capricious use of power is relatively rare except in some large dictatorships and some small family firms. Most leaders are hedged around by constraints—tradition, constitutional limitations, the realities of external situation, rights and privileges of followers, the requirements of teamwork, and most of all the inexorable demands of large-scale organization, which does not operate on capriciousness. In short, most power is wielded circumspectly.

There are many different ways of leading, many kinds of leaders. Consider, for example, the marked contrasts between the politician and the intellectual leaders, the large-scale manager and the spiritual leader. One sees solemn descriptions of the qualities needed for leadership without any reference at all to the fact that the necessary attributes depend on the kind of leadership under discussion. Even in a single field there may be different kinds of leadership with different required attributes. Think of the difference between the military hero and the military manager.

If social action is to occur, certain functions must be performed. The problems facing the group or organization must be clarified, and ideas necessary to their solution formulated. Objectives must be defined. There must be widespread awareness of those objectives, and the will to achieve them. Often those on whom action depends must develop new attitudes and habits. Social machinery must be set in motion. The consequences of social effort must be evaluated and criticized, and new goals set.

A particular leader may contribute at only one point to this process. He may be gifted in analysis of the problem, but limited in his capacity to communicate. He may be superb in communicating, but incapable of managing. He may, in short, be an outstanding leader without being good at every aspect of leadership.

If anything significant is to be accomplished, leaders must understand the social institutions and processes through which action is carried out. And in a society as complex as ours, that is no mean achievement. A leader, whether corporation president, university dean, or labor official, knows his organization, understands what makes it move, comprehends its limitations. Every social system or institution has a logic and dynamic of its own that cannot be ignored.

We have all seen men with lots of bright ideas but no patience with the machinery by which ideas are translated into action. As a rule, the machinery defeats them. It is a pity, because the professional and academic man can play a useful role in practical affairs. But too often he is a dilettante. He dips in here or there; he gives bits of advice on a dozen fronts; he never gets his hands dirty working with one piece of the social machinery until he knows it well. He will not take the time to understand the social institutions and processes by which change is accomplished.

Although our decentralized system of leadership has served us well, we must not be so complacent as to imagine that it has no weaknesses, that it faces no new challenges, or that we have nothing to learn. There are grave questions to be answered concerning leadership of our society. Are we living up to standards of leadership that we have achieved in our own past? Do the conditions of modern life introduce new complications into the task of leadership? Are we failing to prepare leaders for tomorrow?

Here are some of our salient difficulties.

Failure to Cope with the Big Question:

Nothing should be allowed to impair the effectiveness and independence of our specialized leadership groups. But such fragmented leadership does create certain prob-

lems. One of them is that it isn't anybody's business to think about the big questions facing our society. Where are we headed? Where do we want to head? What are the major trends determining our future? Should we do anything about them? Our fragmented leadership fails to deal effectively with these transcendent questions.

Very few of our most prominent people take a really large view of the leadership assignment. Most of them are simply tending the machinery of that part of society to which they belong. The machinery may be a great corporation or a great government agency or a great law practice or a great university. These people may tend it very well indeed, but they are not pursuing a vision of what the total society needs. They have not developed a strategy as to how it can be achieved, and they are not moving to accomplish it.

One does not blame them, of course. They do not see themselves as leaders of the society at large, and they have plenty to do handling their own specialized role.

Yet it is doubtful that we can any longer afford such widespread inattention to the largest questions facing us. We achieved greatness in an era when changes came more slowly than now. The problems facing the society took shape at a stately pace. We could afford to be slow in recognizing them, slow in coping with them. Today, problems of enormous import hit us swiftly. Great social changes emerge with frightening speed. We can no longer afford to respond in a leisurely fashion.

Our inability to cope with the largest questions tends to weaken the private sector. Any questions that cannot be dealt with by one of the special leadership groups—that is, any question that cuts across special fields—tends to end up being dealt with by government. Most Americans value the role played by nongovernmental leadership in this country, and would wish it to continue. In my judgment it will not continue under the present conditions.

The cure is not to work against the fragmentation of leadership, which is a vital element in our pluralism, but to create better channels of communication among significant leadership groups, especially in connection with the great issues that transcend any particular group.

Failure of Confidence:

Another of the maladies of leadership today is a failure of confidence. Anyone who accomplishes anything of significance has more confidence than the facts would justify. It is something that outstanding executives have in common with gifted military commanders, brilliant political leaders, and great artists. It is true of societies as well as of individuals. Every great civilization has been characterized by confidence in itself.

Lacking such confidence, too many leaders add ingenious new twists to the modern art which I call "How to reach a decision without really deciding." They require that the question be put through a series of clearances with the organization and let the clearance process settle it. Or take a public opinion poll and let the poll settle it. Or devise elaborate statistical systems, cost-accounting systems, information-processing systems, hoping that out of them will come unassailable support for one course of action rather than another.

This is not to say that leadership cannot profit enormously from good information. If the modern leader doesn't know the facts he is in grave trouble, but rarely do the facts provide unqualified guidance. After the facts are in, the leader must in some measure emulate the little girl who told the teacher she was going to draw a picture of God. The teacher said, "But, Mary, no one knows what God looks like"; and Mary said, "They will when I get through."

The confidence required of leaders poses a delicate problem for a free society. We

don't want to be led by Men of Destiny who think they know all the answers. Neither do we wish to be led by Nervous Nellies. It is a matter of balance. We are no longer in much danger, in this society, from Men of Destiny. But we *are* in danger of falling under the leadership of men who lack the confidence to lead. And we are in danger of destroying the effectiveness of those who have a natural gift for leadership.

Of all our deficiencies with respect to leadership, one of the gravest is that we are not doing what we should to encourage potential leaders. In the late eighteenth century we produced out of a small population a truly extraordinary group of leaders—Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Franklin, Madison, Monroe, and others. Why is it so difficult today, out of a vastly greater population, to produce men of that caliber? It is a question that most reflective people ask themselves sooner or later. There is no reason to doubt that the human material is still there, but there is excellent reason to believe that we are failing to develop it—or that we are diverting it into nonleadership activities.

The Antileadership Vaccine:

Indeed, it is my belief that we are immunizing a high proportion of our most gifted young people against any tendencies to leadership. It will be worth our time to examine how the antileadership vaccine is administered.

The process is initiated by the society itself. The conditions of life in a modern, complex society are not conducive to the emergence of leaders. The young person today is acutely aware of the fact that he is an anonymous member of a mass society, an individual lost among millions of others. The processes by which leadership is exercised are not visible to him, and he is bound to believe that they are exceedingly intricate. Very little in his experience encourages him to think that he might some day exercise a role of leadership.

This unfocused discouragement is of little consequence compared with the expert dissuasion the young person will encounter if he is sufficiently bright to attend a college or university. In those institutions today, the best students are carefully schooled to avoid leadership responsibilities.

Most of our intellectually gifted young people go from college directly into graduate school or into one of the older and more prestigious professional schools. There they are introduced to—or more correctly, powerfully indoctrinated in—a set of attitudes appropriate to scholars, scientists, and professional men. This is all to the good. The students learn to identify themselves strongly with their calling and its ideals. They acquire a conception of what a good scholar, scientist, or professional man is like.

As things stand now, however, that conception leaves little room for leadership in the normal sense; the only kind of leadership encouraged is that which follows from the performing of purely professional tasks in a superior manner. Entry into what most of us would regard as the leadership roles in the society at large is discouraged.

In the early stages of a career, there is a good reason for this: becoming a first-class scholar, scientist, or professional requires single-minded dedication. Unfortunately, by the time the individual is sufficiently far along in his career to afford a broadening of interests, he often finds himself irrevocably set in a narrow mold.

The antileadership vaccine has other more subtle and powerful ingredients. The image of the corporation president, politician, or college president that is current among most intellectuals and professionals today has some decidedly unattractive features. It is said that such men compromise their convictions almost daily, if not hourly. It is said that they have tasted the corrupting experience of power. They must be status seekers, the argument goes, or they would not be where they are.

Needless to say, the student picks up such attitudes. It is not that professors propound

these views and students learn them. Rather, they are in the air and students absorb them. The resulting unfavorable image contrasts dramatically with the image these young people are given of the professional who is almost by definition dedicated to his field, pure in his motives, and unencumbered by worldly ambition.

My own extensive acquaintance with scholars and professionals on the one hand and administrators and managers on the other does not confirm this contrast in character. In my experience, each category has its share of opportunists. Nevertheless, the negative attitudes persist.

As a result the academic world appears to be approaching a point at which everyone will want to educate the technical expert who advises the leader, or the intellectual who stands off and criticizes the leader, but no one will want to educate the leader himself.

Are Leaders Necessary?

For a good many academic and other professional people, negative attitudes toward leadership go deeper than skepticism concerning the leader's integrity. Many have real doubts, not always explicitly formulated, about the necessity for leadership.

The doubts are of two kinds. First, many scientific and professional people are accustomed to the kinds of problems that can be solved by expert technical advice or action. It is easy for them to imagine that any social enterprise could be managed in the same way. They envisage a world that does not need leaders, only experts. The notion is based, of course, upon a false conception of the leader's function. The supplying of technically correct solutions is the least of his responsibilities.

There is another kind of question that some academic or professional people raise concerning leadership: Is the very notion of leadership somehow at odds with the ideals of a free society? Is it a throwback to earlier notions of social organization?

These are not foolish questions. We have in fact outgrown or rejected several varieties of leadership that have loomed large in the history of mankind. We do not want autocratic leaders who treat us like inferior beings. We do not want leaders, no matter how wise or kind, who treat us like children.

But at the same time that we were rejecting those forms of leadership, we were evolving forms more suitable to our values. As a result our best leaders today are not out of place in a free society—on the contrary, they strengthen our free society.

We have the kinds of leaders we want, but we cannot choose to do without them. It is in the nature of social organization that we must have them at all levels of our national life, in and out of government—in business, labor, politics, education, science, the arts, and every other field. Since we must have them it helps considerably if they are gifted in the performance of their appointed task. The sad truth is that a great many of our organizations are badly managed or badly led. And because of that, people within those organizations are frustrated when they need not be frustrated. They are not helped when they could be helped. They are not given the opportunities to fulfill themselves that are clearly possible.

In the minds of some, leadership is associated with goals that are distasteful—power, profit, efficiency, and the like. But leadership, properly conceived, also serves the individual human goals that our society values so highly, and we shall not achieve those goals without it.

Leaders worthy of the name, whether they are university presidents or senators, corporation executives or newspaper editors, school superintendents or governors, contribute to the continuing definition and articulation of the most cherished values of our society. They offer, in short, moral leadership.

So much of our energy has been devoted to tending the machinery of our complex

society that we have neglected this element in leadership. I am using the word "moral" to refer to the shared values that must undergird any functioning society. The thing that makes a number of individuals a society rather than a population or a crowd is the presence of shared attitudes, habits and values, a shared conception of the enterprise of which they are all a part, shared views of why it is worthwhile for the enterprise to continue and to flourish. Leaders can help in bringing that about. In fact, it is required that they do so. When leaders lose their credibility or their moral authority, then the society begins to disintegrate.

Leaders have a significant role in creating the state of mind that is the society. They can serve as symbols of the moral unity of the society. They can express the values that hold the society together. Most important, they can conceive and articulate goals that lift people out of their petty preoccupations, carry them above the conflicts that tear a society apart, and unite them in the pursuit of objectives worthy of their best efforts.

Decision Making

Every group, to achieve its goal, is constantly involved in making decisions: big decisions, little decisions; easy decisions, hard decisions; right decisions, wrong decisions; but always, decisions, decisions, decisions.

Decision making is thus a continuing pattern of relationships among members of a group; a pattern over which every individual member has significant influence. It is amazing the effect a bit of information here, a loud objection there, an expression of approval or hostility, envy or admiration, contempt or condescension can have on an impending decision.

So there is little wonder that group after group has difficulty making decisions. Some become paralyzed when confronted with a decision; some argue interminably over a minor point; others rush into a vote, only to reverse their decision later on or fail in carrying it out; others appoint a committee or look for a savior (the chairman) to save them from having to decide.

Difficulties in Decision Making

Most of the difficulties encountered by a group in making decisions center around one or another of the following factors.

Fear of Consequences In some groups the possible outcomes of an impending decision may bring divisions and disagreements. Frank acknowledgement of these fears often suggests how they can be dealt with effectively.

Conflicting Loyalties Multiple membership in a number of groups frequently leads to divided loyalties among group members. An atmosphere in which it is possible for these conflicts to be brought out into the open without threat to the individual is a great help in their resolution.

Interpersonal Conflict In groups of any size personal differences occur which provoke feelings of affection or antipathy among members and which inhibit sound decision making. Often another member who is not involved in the interpersonal conflict can bring the real problem into bolder relief.

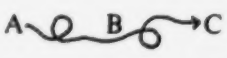
Methodological Blundering A group may be so bound by rigid procedures that there is little chance for free expression of differences. Or a group may allow itself to substitute personal opinion for adequate data. Or a group may approach the decision making process without testing for consensus.

Inadequate Leadership A designated leader falls short of his responsibilities when he restricts the expression of opinion or discussion of issues, when he fails to provide assistance in selecting appropriate methods for decision making, or when he is insensitive to the factors causing difficulty—the motivations and standards of his group.

Areas of Decision Making

As a group moves toward its goal, it seldom proceeds in a straight course from "A" to "B"—

Rather its movement is more up and down and around, sometimes even ending up at "C" instead of its original goal of "B"—



A number of problems must be solved along the way, each of which involves any number of decisions. Six basic problem areas in the movement of a group toward its goal can be identified. Of course no group moves directly through the six problem areas in a given order. There is a constant movement back and forth among them; and they are always present in various ways at various times requiring various decisions.

Problem Area #1: The Data (What is our situation?)

Who are we? Where are we? What is our common ground? What are the limits within which we must work? Who or what brought us together? Until a group recognizes its actual present situation, by gathering the data about that situation, any attempt to suggest goals is premature.

Problem Area #2: The Purpose (What is our destination?)

Where do we want to go? What choices are open to us? Until there is general agreement on the goal, the group will not move effectively. Members of a group who have not accepted the goal or who have had little voice in choosing it, tend to be self-oriented. The greater the share all members have in choosing the goal of a group, the greater will be their willingness to subordinate their immediate personal interests to the common interests of the group. The setting of a goal is also necessarily tentative and must be re-examined from time to time in order to test its adequacy.

Problem Area #3: The Plan (How do we get there?)

What procedures are called for? What resources are needed? Members become more and more involved in the functions of initiating, clarifying, expediting, and testing for consensus as a group goes about determining the best ways and means, routes and methods, necessary to get under way.

Problem Area #4: The People (How free are we to move?)

If a group is to be creative, individuals must be free to act, to offer insights, to test ideas, to make contributions, to share the leadership without fear of inadequacy. Such functions as encouraging, harmonizing, and supporting are needed to maintain an atmosphere of freedom.

Problem Area #5: The Progress (Where are we now?)

Where are we in the process of settling all the other problems? Are we going in the right direction? How far have we gotten? Do we know where we are? Do we need to change our goal or our procedures? Is everyone still on board? From time to time a group must take a fix, make a progress report to itself. Many a group has failed to reach its goal because it assumed everyone knew where the group was when actually confusion reigned.

Problem Area #6: The Outcome (Where have we arrived?)

Have we reached our goal? Where are we finally in terms of our achievement? It may not be the original goal, but is it satisfactory? A group sees its goal through the eyes of its members and their need to arrive at some goal.

Categories of Decisions

In moving toward its goal and in solving its problems, a group makes countless decisions, usually in a variety of ways.

Plops A decision suggested by an individual to which there is no response. Plopping often occurs in a new group confronted by a complexity of problems; in a group where a number of the members have fairly equal status; when a member is overly aggressive; when a member has difficulty in articulating his suggestion.

Self-authorized Decision A decision made by an individual who assumes authority to do so. When such a decision is proposed, the group as a whole often finds it easier to accept than reject, even though some individuals may not be in agreement. The decision is thus by default.

Hand Clasping A decision made by two members of the group joining forces. Such a decision emerges so suddenly that it catches the other members of the group off guard and at the same time presents them with another problem (how to deal with the two people at the same time).

Topic Jumping A decision cut short by the inappropriate intrusion of another topic. Topic jumping confuses the issue confronting the group and thus can change the nature of the decision.

The Clique A decision agreed upon in advance by several members of the group. Cliques are present in almost every group and their pre-arranged decision may be very good. But the effect of collusion is to destroy group cohesiveness and a sense of trust among group members.

Majority Rule A decision made by some form of voting. The traditional procedure of taking a vote often seems to be the only way in which to reach a decision under the given circumstances. Nonetheless the minority may remain against the decision despite the vote and therefore not likely to act on it.

Does Anyone Disagree? A decision made by pressure not to disagree. When confronted by such a question, several persons who really disagree strongly or who have not had opportunity to express their opinion on the issue, may show real reluctance to voice opposition with no apparent support.

We all Agree, Don't We? A decision made by pressure to agree. Again, as when under pressure not to disagree, persons who really disagree or who have not had opportunity to express their opinion would probably be reluctant to voice opposition alone.

Unanimity A decision made by an overt and unanimous consent. The pressure to conform may be strong enough to win apparent 100% agreement. But even a majority of the members may inwardly disagree and may consequently fail to act in support of the decision.

Consensus A decision made after allowing all aspects of the issue, both positive and negative, to be put forth to the degree that everyone openly agrees it is probably the best decision. Dissenters, once they have been clearly heard, will usually go along with a decision and act upon it with commitment, at least to the point of provision for later assessment.

Steps in Decision Making

Effective decision making by a group on the basis of consensus is both realistic and possible. But it is not easy. There are five basic steps which a group can take in arriving at a decision with some assurance that it represents the mind of the group as a whole and that it will be acted upon. It is well also to be aware of what may help a particular step, of what may block it, and of what may cause its omission.

Defining the Problem The process of defining the problem, sharpening the focus so that the issue is clear, internalizing its various implications, clarifying it and elaborating on it.

- *omission:* a standing committee that is reappointed year after year but that never

reviews its purpose.

- *blocks:* the assumption that the problem is clear; overabstraction of the problem; the assumption that the problem is relevant.
- *helps:* a problem census; small groups; general discussion.

Suggesting Alternative Solutions The process of getting ideas on the various alternative solutions to the problem from all members.

- *omission:* a chairman who limits a group to working on the implications of a solution he has already decided upon.
- *blocks:* lack of data; lack of experience; group size; member threat; over-formality; inadequate maintenance functions; polarizing on a particular solution.
- *helps*: brainstorming; additional data; subgroup work; a climate of freedom; periods of silence.

Testing the Alternatives The process of examining the alternatives in the light of all available data, previous experience, possible consequences, relevance to the problem, and members' attitudes.

- *omission:* the prestige or influence of the chairman or of some other member which prevents the group from putting his alternative under real scrutiny.
- *blocks:* lack of data; premature voting; overprotection of ideas by individual members; inadequate maintenance functions.

Choosing Among Alternatives The process of reaching a decision by choosing one of the alternatives, or a combination of alternatives, that will provide a solution to the problem defined.

- *omission:* a committee that goes on and on and on—exploring the ifs, ands, and buts, ad infinitum—but never arrives at a decision.
- *blocks:* inadequate testing; lack of clarity regarding the problem; premature voting; no testing for consensus; identification of ideas with persons.
- *helps:* expression of feelings by all members; maintenance of an agenda for future reference; summarizing of discussion; testing for consensus.

Planning for Action The process of making detailed plans for carrying out the decision by examining the implications of the choice and testing the relevance of proposed action. It should be noted that the planning step sometimes results in re-thinking the decision and returning to one or another prior step in the decision-making process.

- *omission:* failure to assign responsiblity for implementation of the decision once it has been made.
- *blocks:* failure to reach consensus; failure to explore adequately the implications of proposed action; assignment of total responsibility for implementation to one person.
- *helps:* feedback; observer reports; evaluation; post-meeting reaction reports; review of data; a climate of freedom.

Conditions Relevant to Group Decision Making

There are many instances where, due to the pressure of time, the type of decision, or the area of responsibility, an individual and not a group may most appropriately make a decision. There are, however, certain conditions that make decision making by a group the most appropriate means of solving a particular problem:

- when various points of view and opinions are needed.

- when the group is directly affected by the decision.
- when the group must carry out the decision.
- when the group has learned to work effectively together.
- when the leadership functions are shared.
- when decision-making procedures appropriate to the problem are used.

Factors Which Facilitate Group Decision Making

There are certain specific factors that affect any group situation and that serve especially to improve the decision making process:

- a clear definition of the problem.
- a clear understanding of who has what degree of responsibility for the decision.
- effective means of producing and communicating ideas.
- an appropriate size of the group for decision making.
- effective means of testing alternative solutions.
- effective means of implementing the decision.
- commitment of the designated leader to the group decision making process.
- agreement on the decision making procedures prior to deliberation on the issue.

Conducting The Board Meeting

The following notes constitute a thumbnail reference for proper board procedure. They may be helpful to board of education officers who are responsible for seeing that meetings are properly conducted.

Frequency

Regular meetings: at least once every two months while schools are in session. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:10-6

Special meetings on call: *N.J.A.C.* 6:3-1.9 provides that the secretary must call a meeting whenever requested by the president of the board or by a petition signed by a majority of the full board.

Organizational meetings: *N.J.S.A.* 18A:10-3. Each board of education shall organize annually at a regular meeting held not later than at 8 p.m. at which time new members shall take office: In Type I districts on May 16 or on the following day if that day be Sunday; In all Type II districts on any day of the first week following the annual school election.

If the organization meeting cannot take place on that day by reason of a lack of a quorum or any other reason, said meeting shall be held within 3 days thereafter.

Time

No later than 8:00 p.m., must be public. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:10-6; 10:4-6 *et seq.*, "Open Public Meetings Act."

Place

Up to the board; must be within the district and should be in a room large enough to accommodate interested members of the public.

Notice

Notice to the Public **General Rule:** No meeting of the board may be held unless "adequate notice" has been given. *N.J.S.A.* 10:4-9. "Adequate notice" means written notice to the public at least 48 hours in advance, stating the time, date, location and, to the extent known, the agenda of the meeting and whether formal action may be taken. *N.J.S.A.* 10:4-8 (d).

Notice to the public is accomplished by doing *all* of the following:

(1) prominently posting the written notices;

(2) providing at least two newspapers with a copy of the notice, including the agenda;

(3) filing the notice with the appropriate municipal clerk or clerks;

(4) mailing the notice to those persons requesting that the board mail them the schedule of meetings. *N.J.S.A.* 10:4-8 (d); 10:4-19.

Exceptions: Where annual notice is given, no further notice is required. *N.J.S.A. 10:4-8(d). Annual notice means that at least once each year, within 7 days following the annual organization meeting, or if there is no organization meeting, no later than January 10, the public body must establish a schedule of the regular meetings to be held during the succeeding year. Such schedule shall contain the location of each meeting to the extent it is known, and the time and date of each meeting. N.J.S.A.* 10:4-18.

Annual notice is accomplished by doing *all* of the following:

(1) posting the notice in a public place reserved for such announcements;

(2) mailing the notice to the designated official newspapers;

(3) submitting the notice to the appropriate municipal office or offices; and

(4) mailing the notice to those persons requesting that the board mail them the schedule of meetings. *N.J.S.A.* 10:4-18; 10:4-19.

Emergency meetings may be held in the absence of 48-hour notice under certain narrowly drawn circumstances, provided that the statutory guidelines for emergency meetings are satisfied. See *N.J.S.A.* 10:4-9.

Some matters are specificially excluded from the open public meeting requirement. *N.J.S.A.* 10:4-12(b).

If a meeting is to be limited *solely* to consideration of such exempted items, the general rule for notice does not apply. *N.J.S.A.* 10:4-9(a), and the board may discuss such exempted matters in a session closed to the public. At the public meeting immediately preceding, however, the board must adopt a resolution stating that a closed session will be held, for what purpose it is being held, and the time when the matters can be disclosed to the public. *N.J.S.A.* 10:4-13. At the closed session, the board must limit its discussion to the exempt matters.

Notice to Board Members Secretary must give notice of every meeting to each member of the board. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:17-7; 18A:10-4; *N.J.A.C.* 6:3-1.9. There is no requirement as to method.

Notice to members is waived if all members attend and participate in planning special meeting. Open Public Meetings Act may not be waived, however. No person or public body may fail to invite a portion of its members to a meeting for the purpose of circumventing the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. *N.J.S.A.* 10:4-11.

Notice to member is waived if unable to serve on absent member.

Omnibus clause may cover routine matters only.

Quorum

Majority of full membership constitutes a quorum. Without a quorum, no action may be taken and no legal meeting may be held. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:10-6.

Presiding Officer

President if present; if not, vice president; if neither present, members may choose a temporary chairperson to preside.

Actions

Must be by motion or resolution, recorded. Most actions are passed by a simple majority of those voting.

Actions requiring majority of whole number of members of the board:

- Appointment and transfer of teaching staff members. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:27-1 and 18A:25-1
- Adoption or alteration of course of study. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:33-1
- Selection of textbooks. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:34-1
- Admission of child who has never attended school after October 1st following opening of school. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:38-6
- Decision to use voting machines. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:14-39
- Appointment or removal of board secretary and assistant board secretary. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:16-1, 18A:17-5, and 18A:17-13 (subject to 18A:6-10, 18A:17-2 and 18A:6-31).

- Appointment of superintendent of schools. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:16-1, 18A:17-15
- Appointment or removal of an assistant superintendent of schools. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:17-16, (subject to 18A:28-4 to 18A:28-8 and 18A:6-10 to 18A:6-17)
- Determination of sufficiency of charges to dismiss or reduce the salary of a tenured employee and forward charges to Commissioner. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-11.
- Appointment or removal of a business manager. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:17-25 (subject to 18A:6-10, 18A:17-2 and 18A:6-11 to 18A:6-17)
- Exchange school lands for lands of equal value. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:20-8, disposal of lands 18A:20-5.
- Withholding a prescribed employment or adjustment increment. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:29-14
- Restoring or removing an assistant superintendent, principal or teaching staff member following suspension by superintendent of schools. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:25-6 (subject to *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-10; 18A:6-11; 18A:28-5)
- Removing president or vice president from office for failure to perform a duty imposed on him. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:15-2
- Directing board secretary to make payroll deductions. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:16-8
- Establishment of a county educational audio-visual aids center. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:51-1
- Applying for membership in an already existing county educational audio-visual aids center. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:51-11
- Appointment, fixing the salary and defining the duties of a school business administrator. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:17-14.1
- Determination of the budget to be voted upon by the voters at the annual election in a Type II district having no board of school estimate. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:22-32
- Adoption of question to be submitted to voters concerning undertaking any capital project. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:22-39
- Adoption of resolution by Type II district authorizing issuance of school bonds. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:24-10
- Appointing an executive superintendent in districts in cities of the first class with a population over 325,000. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:17A-1
- Applying to the county superintendent to investigate the advisability of withdrawing from a regional district. *N.J.A.C.* 6:3-3.1
- Purchase or sale of bonds or securities. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:20-37,39

A three-fourths vote of the members present is necessary to hold an emergency public meeting without 48-hour statutory notice. *N.J.S.A.* 10:4-9(b). Any board rule requiring two-thirds or more vote on other matters is invalid; limits own powers. A board rule requiring majority vote of whole board questionable when not required by law.

Voting procedures to be established by board. May be voice, show of hands, or roll call unless otherwise provided for by law. The minutes of each meeting must reflect the vote of each member. *N.J.S.A.* 10:4-14.

The President has a vote on every issue.

When a majority vote of the full membership is not required, an abstention is counted as an affirmative vote unless the member abstaining expressly dissents from taking affirmative action prior to the vote. *King v. Board of Education of Asbury Park,* 1939-49 S.L.D. 20; *Farmer v. Board of Education of Camden,* 1967 S.L.D. 287. A board policy stating how an abstention will be counted will be the determinant if it exists.

Rules

- May be made by board for its own guidance and protection. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:11-1
- May be suspended or modified unless rights of a third party intervene.
- May delegate ministerial duties.
- May not delegate discretionary powers.
- May not use proxies, substitutes, etc.
- Agendas and order of business up to the board.
- Rules should be readopted at organization meeting.
- Board has discretionary power to limit or prohibit active participation by members of the public at board meetings. Public may not be excluded from the meeting, however, except where specifically authorized by statute. *N.J.S.A.* 10:4-12.

Records

It is the duty of the Secretary to record all actions of board in a suitable book. *N.J.S.A.* 18A:17-7. Minutes are public records, open at reasonable times and places to inspection by members of the public. *N.J.S.A.* 47:1A-2. Minutes must show time and place of each meeting, members present, subjects considered, actions taken, and vote of each member. *N.J.S.A.* 10:4-14. Minutes should show that actions were in accordance with the law (low bidder awarded bid, etc.).

Actions should be recorded in sufficient detail (appointments should show full name, salary, duration of appointment, effective date, proper title or duties, etc.), but need not be verbatim. It is permissible to take sketchy notes and record in greater detail later. Minutes should be corrected before approval at the next meeting of the board. However, minutes must be made available to the public as soon as they are prepared. If release takes place prior to formal approval, a statement so indicating should be placed at the top of the minutes. Approval of the president optional. Slight irregularities do not affect sufficiency if the meaning is clear. Minutes may be corrected at any future time if necessary to reveal the truth of the action taken.

Reconsideration and Rescission

Reconsideration and rescission of an action acceptable provided the rights or interests of a third party do not intervene.

Ratification

A board may ratify later if it could have taken action legally in the first place.

If an action of a board is challenged, within the time limits, for a violation of the Open Public Meetings Act, the board may take corrective action by acting anew at a subsequent public meeting held in conformity with the Act. *N.J.S.A.* 10:4-15(a)

Understanding Parliamentary Procedure

Alex Richardson

The first encounter with parliamentary procedure often produces bewilderment at the mass of detail and a feeling of pique at the seemingly stilted language employed. Neither impression is justified. The details follow a logical pattern and are easier to cope with once the principles are understood. The specific language has a reason for being. Just like legal terminology, each phrase has developed a very precise meaning through use over the years. Sticking to the proper phrasing reduces the chance of misunderstanding and, incidentally, makes it easier to look up needed information in a reference work. This article introduces the reader to the principles of parliamentary procedure, after which the standard reference works should appear less formidable.

Parliamentary procedure was not created by an individual nor enacted by law. It is a body of common practice that has grown over the years and been refined, by generations of debaters, into a technique that seems to be the best way for deliberative bodies to reach decisions in a reasonably expeditious manner.

There are three important principles of parliamentary procedure:

- The right of the majority to reach a decision.
- The right of the minority to be heard.
- The assembly itself is the final authority.

These three principles must be maintained but, since they are often at variance with one another, parliamentary procedure consists in balancing the conflict.

All members of an assembly should be familiar with the principles of parliamentary procedure. Some feel that only the presider needs to be knowledgeable; but if all participants understand the procedures, the process will work more smoothly and efficiently. On the other hand, no one, particularly a newer member of the body, is expected to know all the details. Indeed, one of the most important things to be learned is that asking questions about procedure during debate is not only possible, but encouraged. Asking a question about procedure, ("Is an amendment in order now?") takes precedence over all other business except adjournment, setting the time of the next meeting, or insisting that the agenda be followed.

The business of a deliberative assembly is handled by the basic unit of the *Motion.* The 20 common motions in their proper precedence are shown in Table 1. At this point, however, emphasis should be on the basic principles. The details can be mastered later. ADJOURN is routine, and motions 1,3,4,6,8,9,11,19, and 20 rarely occur. The bulk of the work is accomplished by 10 motions (5,7,10,12-18).

TABLE I

1. Fix Time of Next Meeting
2. Adjourn
3. Questions of Privilege
4. Call for Orders of the Day
5. Points of Order/Information
6. Appeal
7. Suspend the Rules
8. Create Special Orders
9. Withdraw (a motion)
10. Vote/Division Assembly or Question
11. Objection to Consideration
12. Table/Take from Table
13. Previous Question
14. Postpone to Certain Day/Time
15. Refer
16. Amend
17. Postpone Indefinitely
18. Main Motion
19. Reconsider
20. Rescind

The process starts with the making of a MAIN MOTION; for example, "I move that we have a picnic on Tuesday". The other motions are used to debate the issue, or modify it, until agreement is reached and some disposition of the issue has been made. Another way of looking at it is that a piece of business is defined, discussed, and disposed of. A motion must be "made", or "on the floor", before discussion starts, because of

the basic need to keep discussion within bounds. Without a motion, the presider has much greater difficulty keeping the discussion on track. Of course, two main motions cannot be on the floor at one time.

The order of listing in Table I gives the precedence of the motions. No motion may be acted upon while another of a higher precedence is pending (under consideration). Thus if there is a CALL FOR ORDERS OF THE DAY and a member raises a QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE, the QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE takes precedence and is settled before resuming action on the CALL FOR ORDERS.

It is not necessary for a motion to be perfectly expressed in order to start debate. The motion can be changed by amending it. The motion to amend is simply "I move that we amend the motion to read Thursday instead of Tuesday." There is no limit to the number of amendments that can be applied to a motion, although an extensive number would suggest rewriting the motion. The motion, as amended, should certainly be read in full before voting. Even an amendment can be amended, but here the process stops. You cannot amend an amendment to an amendment.

When the presider senses that the group is ready, a vote will be called for. It may be by voice (viva voce), show of hands, or by ballot, depending on current needs. Frequently a voice vote suffices although, if there is any doubt, an accurate count should be taken.

Any member has the right to CALL FOR A DIVISION. This means take a count and the term stems from the time when members of the British Parliament actually filed out the chamber by one of two doors and were tallied as they went. The vote on the question "disposes" of the question and brings to a close the basic "define-discuss-dispose" cycle. The word "dispose" has significance because once voted on, a matter cannot be brought up again at the same session except by a motion to RECONSIDER, which has its own complications. These are discussed later.

If the motion has amendments applied to it the amendments are voted on first, in reverse order. An amendment to an amendment, if any, is taken first, then the amendment itself. When all amendments have been voted on, the MAIN MOTION, as amended, is voted on. If the motion and the amendments are simple and clearly understood the presider may expedite things by simply asking "All those in favor of the motion as amended. . . ." *AMEND* is shown in Table I as motion 16, but it actually takes its precedence from, and precedes, the motion to which it applies.

At this point a brief word about seconding is in order. Most motions require a second, on the principle that at least two members should want the matter discussed or a particular action taken. This is in line with the principle that one person shouldn't be able to tie up an assembly with unnecessary motions. This is the right of the assembly to proceed. Since most motions require a second it is easier to remember the exceptions. Of the motions listed in Table I only five *do not* require a second. These are: QUESTIONS OF PRIVILEGE, CALL FOR ORDERS, OBJECTION TO CONSIDERATION, WITHDRAW A MOTION, and POINTS OF ORDER/INFORMATION. Of these five, POINTS OF ORDER is the only one commonly encountered.

Situations arise where the simple move-discuss-vote cycle will not suffice. It may be that the members want further time to study the idea or may wish to discuss another point before deciding this one. In such cases, the motion is LAY ON THE TABLE or simply TABLE. When the body is ready to resume discussion the motion is made to TAKE FROM THE TABLE. The tabling motions have high priority, taking precedence over POSTPONING, REFERRING (to committee) or closing debate (PREVIOUS QUESTION). This is done because tabling leaves the question within reach of the assembly, while the other actions put the matter beyond reach, or out of consideration

for this session. Motions do not have to be TAKEN FROM THE TABLE in the same order in which they were TABLED. There are also means of disposing of a motion other than tabling or voting. The body may REFER (to committee), POSTPONE TO A CERTAIN TIME, or POSTPONE INDEFINITELY. After a Main Motion has been voted on it may be RECONSIDERED or RESCINDED but, as noted, these motions have additional complications and are not often used.

Another important motion is POINTS OF ORDER. This motion calls the assembly's attention to a possible procedural error. The motion is given a high priority so that if procedural error has occurred, the assembly is saved the trouble of undoing work done incorrectly. Any member may move it, it does not require a second, and may even interrupt a speaker who has the floor. It should be moved promptly, at the point of infraction, so to speak. It is moved by saying "I rise to a Point of Order." POINTS OF INFORMATION (technically Parliamentary Inquiry) enjoys the same precedence as POINTS OF ORDER although it is sometimes omitted from charts and tables. This motion was referred to earlier and no member should hesitate to make an inquiry any time that procedure is in doubt. However, POINTS OF INFORMATION are restricted to questions of parliamentary procedure. Questions about the subject matter only enjoy the precedence of normal debate.

POINTS OF ORDER and INFORMATION are ruled on by the chair, subject to APPEAL to the assembly. The chair may also rule on dilatory or frivolous motions, this also being a means of keeping things moving. On the subject of appeals, any ruling of the chair may be appealed but the APPEAL must be made reasonably promptly (before further business is conducted). An APPEAL needs a second and a tie vote sustains the chair. If the chair is a member of the assembly, as is usually the case, the chair's vote is counted in determining whether a tie exists. The idea that the chair votes only to break a tie is erroneous. The chair does not surrender the right to vote by acting as presider.

This question of appeals is a clear illustration of the principles of parliamentary procedure. Permitting the chair to rule on various actions speeds up the proceedings and yet protection against abuse of the power is supplied by the right of appeal, with the assembly itself acting as the final authority. The requirement for a second stops a single person from tying up the proceedings (the right of the majority to proceed).

The whole question of PRIVILEGE is complicated. It affects the precedence of motions since some motions have different priority, depending on whether they are privileged or not privileged. QUESTIONS OF PRIVILEGE rarely come up in the course of board business. Privilege deals generally with the comfort and convenience, or safety, of the members of the assembly. A simple example would be the request for the assembly to quiet down because the noise makes it difficult to follow the discussion. Items of this nature can greatly affect the transaction of business and so QUESTIONS OF PRIVILEGE are given high precedence.

A motion to call for ORDERS OF THE DAY really means, "Stick to the official agenda." The high precedence of this motion makes agenda juggling difficult and is one of the checks and balances that offsets the power of the presider.

SUSPEND THE RULES is also a motion of high precedence because at times, for important reasons, there may be a real need to do so. However, it is very bad practice to circumvent rules simply as a matter of convenience. If it is felt to be necessary, a formal motion should be adopted and recorded. A mere verbal agreement leaves the record in doubt. SUSPEND THE RULES requires two-thirds majority as do all motions that tend to limit the rights of free and unrestricted debate.

CREATE SPECIAL ORDERS places an item on the agenda at a specified time.

When that time arrives, the special order takes precedence over whatever else is on the floor at the time (except another special order).

OBJECTION TO CONSIDERATION should only be used to block debate on a subject that the mover has reason to believe will be detrimental to the assembly's interests. Such might be the case if a member knew that another was likely to make a destructive harangue about another member. This is one of the few motions that does not require a second, since the mover may be the only one who has knowledge of the impending embarrassment. Since the motion does block free and open debate, it must receive a two-thirds majority vote.

PREVIOUS QUESTION is the proper name for what is commonly called "moving the question" or "calling the question." This motion does not automatically close a debate but is a means for quickly determining whether the assembly, as a group, has had sufficient debate. The motion to call the question requires a second and is undebatable. Since it would seriously impinge on the rights of the members to free debate, it, too, requires a two-thirds majority. It is a necessary motion though, because, as we have seen, the assembly must have some means to come to a conclusion and not permit one or two die-hards to tie up a meeting.

LIMITING DEBATE to a fixed length of time (or extending debate) is a form of this same motion and is subject to the same restrictions for the same reasons.

Sometimes a motion is put on the floor containing two unrelated ideas, or ideas the assembly wishes to discuss separately. Usually the presider divides the questions on his own initiative, this being a rare case where the presider actually makes what amounts to a motion. The presider can also divide in response to a motion from the floor. If there is objection to the division the matter should be put to a vote, the assembly being the final authority. The division should take place before debate begins. The motion to DIVIDE ranks with VOTING (10) in precedence. This is one case where there is confusion over terminology. The term "division" can refer to the division of the assembly, i.e., insisting on an exact count of the vote, or it can refer to dividing a motion that has been put on the floor. DIVISION, as a voting term, has already been discussed and it is the second aspect we are addressing here.

RECONSIDERING a question already voted on, as noted earlier, has some complications. Robert, and Jones, hold that the motion may only be made by a member of the prevailing side, that is, who won the vote on the original motion. Sturgis holds that the motion may be made by any member but this would seem to be contrary to the right of the assembly to proceed. In any event, no motion may be twice RECONSIDERED and once the motion has been employed the issue is disposed of for that session. If the question is one voted on at a previous session, the motion to RESCIND should be used, with the same restrictions as to who may move it, and the same two-thirds majority required to pass.

Abstentions by common practice, are counted with the majority; however, recent Commissioner's rulings have held that abstentions be counted differently depending on circumstances. This can be an important distinction, since there are statutory requirements as to majorities in many cases. Board bylaws should clearly spell out the practice to be followed so that there is no doubt. The September/October, 1980, issue of *New Jersey School Leader* contains an excellent reference.

Straw votes are not permitted by Sturgis. She holds that all votes are binding. In small groups this would seem valid but in large groups, such as the Delegate Assembly, where it is sometimes difficult to sense the will of the group, straw votes are a useful means of determining when sufficient debate has occurred, as long as the fact that it is a straw vote is made clear.

FIX TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING is usually not needed in board work since the meetings generally are scheduled in advance. The motion has the highest possible precedence, though, to prevent the meeting from being adjourned without a new meeting being set, thus effectively dissolving the assembly.

There are three good references for those who wish more detailed information:

Robert's Rules of Order, Scott, Foresman and Company
Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance, O. Garfield Jones; Hawthorn Books
Sturgis Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure, McGraw-Hill

General Robert's classic work refined the rules of Congress for the use of ordinary societies and is probably the most widely known and accepted. Sturgis' language is perhaps a bit easier to follow. Jones is simple, but accurate, with somewhat less detail than the other two, but is an excellent introductory text. It also contains a particularly good chart of the motions and their precedence.

Any group following parliamentary procedure should clearly state in their bylaws which authority they follow. There are some technical differences among the authorities, as noted, and these differences should be understood beforehand.

Parliamentary procedure, though at first seeming complicated, does have a logical and orderly pattern. While not perfect, it is like democracy, with weaknesses but better than any know substitute. Some view parliamentary procedure only as a means to obstruct and maneuver. This is all the more reason why everyone concerned should be aware of the basic principles and use them for positive ends. The assembly is the final authority and need not be coerced if it doesn't want to be.

Table II below is a different organization of the basic motions. It shows what options are open to the assembly to produce a given result. The numbers of the standard motions are indicated and where a two-thirds majority is required that is also indicated.

TABLE II

Do you want to:

Introduce an item for action?	
MAIN MOTION or RESOLUTION	#18
Modify the motion?	
AMEND	#16
DIVIDE the question	#10
REFER to a committee	#15
Defer Action?	
POSTPONE TO A CERTAIN TIME	#14
Make a SPECIAL ORDER (2/3)	#8
TABLE	#12
REFER to a committee	#15
Prevent action on the question?	
Before debate: OBJECT TO CONSIDERATION	#11
After debate: POSTPONE INDEFINITELY	#17
Reject the question?	
Before debate: OBJECT TO CONSIDERATION (2/3)	#11
Move the PREVIOUS QUESTION or close debate	#13
After debate: POSTPONE INDEFINITELY	#17
Consider a question a second time?	
TAKE FROM THE TABLE	#12
RECONSIDER	#19
RESCIND previous action	#20
without previous notice (2/3)	
with previous notice (majority)	
Vote?	
Call for division or VOTE	#10
PREVIOUS QUESTION or close debate	#13
Re-open the main question to debate?	
RECONSIDER a debatable question	#19
Prevent action from becoming final?	
RECONSIDER	#19
Change the form of debate?	
LIMIT DEBATE (2/3)	#13
Move the PREVIOUS QUESTION or close debate (2/3)	#13
Interrupt to make a personal request?	
Rise for INFORMATION	#5
QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE	#3
Read a statement	#3
WITHDRAW a motion	#9
PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE INQUIRY	#5
Correct a mistake in the proceedings?	
Rise to a POINT OF ORDER	#5
Propose action which violates a rule of the meetings?	
SUSPEND THE RULES (2/3)	#7
Challenge a decision of the chair?	
APPEAL	#6

The Board President As Policy Leader

Marjorie M. Martin

The business of the board is not to run the schools, but to see that they are run well. This means that the board sets the goals, standards and philosophy by which the schools are to be run, and chooses criteria by which to judge whether they are being well run. This is done through board policy.

Some written policies are required by law. Most are indicated by common sense. A board president who exercises proper leadership in the policy area will make sure that the district has a complete up-to-date policy manual, that policy decisions are a regular agenda item, and that the board is not trapped into crisis policy decisions that may be judged "arbitrary, capricious and unreasonable" by the commissioner of education or the courts.

To exercise proper leadership in policy making, the board president must first of all know what policy is and what it is not. Policies are those broad guidelines set by the school board to chart its course of action. They tell *what* is wanted, and may also include why and how much. But they leave enough leeway for the administrator to develop detailed directions on how to put policies into practice. Administrative rules tell *how,* by *whom, where* and *when* things are to be done. When policy starts to descend into rules and regulations, specifying detail such as bus routes, student pick-up times, or energy-conserving procedures that are to be performed by each teacher in every school, the board is not fulfilling its proper role.

The board president must become familiar with the policy development process, which is not as simple as having the board take action one time on one particular matter. Proper policy saves the board from wasting time making decisions, and taking action on the same matter over and over again. Policy deserves the time necessary for careful consideration of all factors involved. And that time must be organized in such a way that the final policy accurately expresses the intent of the board.

The first step in the policy development process should be taken by the board president by establishing policy consideration as a permanent agenda item. Then comes the decision as to whether the board is to have a policy committee with a policy chairperson, or will function as a committee of the whole. The board president will work very closely with a policy chairperson, but should not take on this time-consuming task.

In many districts, the chief school administrator or the board secretary is appointed policy coordinator and, with his or her staff, is responsible for alerting the board to forthcoming policy decisions, possible conflicts among policies, and relevant law. They also supply the background information necessary for a considered decision, draft the formal policy language from the board's expression of its intent, oversee the dissemination of the adopted policy, and keep the district policy manual up to date. If the board functions as a committee of the whole, all the background material is presented to them for consideration during a work meeting or the regular policy time on the agenda.

If districts have a policy committee, the administrator may still serve as policy coordinator to the committee. In these districts, a board member serves as policy chairperson and, working with the administrator, takes responsibility for alerting the board on forthcoming policy decisions, gathering background information, identifying possible policy conflicts and presenting material to the board for consideration.

In either case, when a decision has been made as to the board's will in the matter, the chairperson or coordinator arranges for the drafting of policy language and places the draft on the agenda for its first reading. Depending on the bylaws of the board, it may be adopted at this time. If there are any revisions, they are incorporated into the draft before its second reading and adoption. The new or revised policy is then disseminated to all policy manual holders, and the administration formulates rules and regulations to implement it. The chairperson or coordinator makes a record of the date at which the board will expect to evaluate the results of the policy, and when it should

be reviewed to determine its continuing value.

Many tools and services are available through the New Jersey School Boards Association School Policy Service. An arm of the Management Information Department, the School Policy Service has developed techniques and accumulated resources that can be invaluable to policy making boards.

Sample policies are available through the "Policy Clearinghouse," another branch of the Policy Service. The Clearinghouse is a major source of not only sample policies *per se,* but of background information useful in policy consideration. Many local districts in New Jersey forward copies of their new policies to NJSBA for inclusion in the Clearinghouse. Sample policies are available on request from the Management Information Department in Trenton.

All board members and administrators can keep abreast of the latest news in mandated policies by reading "Policy Update" in every issue of *School Leader.* "Update" lists most new or changed Administrative Code regulations, statutes, and court decisions that require policy consideration. It also includes suggestions for getting the most out of the Policy Service's infinitely expandable coding system, and samples of policies it would be wise for every district to have. Policies published as samples in "Update" have been reviewed by both the Legal and Labor Relations staff of the Association, and are within the law as of the date of publication.

Every month, the Policy Service mails out "Policy Portfolio," which contains sample policies, administrative regulations—even exhibits, if they are appropriate—on a particular topic of statewide importance. Many times, local district policies are adapted for inclusion in the portfolio. Mailed directly to the policy chairperson or the board president, and the chief school administrator, "Policy Portfolio" is intended to be filed in the Policy Reference Manual ringbinders mailed to each district in 1978. As these sample policies accumulate, they provide a core of solid information on proper policy language and content.

Policy, Volume 2 of NJSBA's School Board Library Series, is a comprehensive guide to updating and maintaining your school district's policy manual. This handbook provides your board with the information needed to develop local policies that fit the image and needs of your schools. *Policy* can be purchased by contacting NJSBA's Business Office.

The staff of the Policy Service is available for telephone consultation on tough policy problems and can also give limited assistance to a board that wishes to tackle its policy manual project without hiring an outside firm.

The president who establishes sound, careful policy practices, and sees that the board follows them, makes his or her own job easier and lays the groundwork for continual improvement in the educational program being offered to the children of the district.

Department of Management Information
New Jersey School Boards Association

Ten Questions To Pry Apart Your District's Curriculum

Roger Worner

Call it a bowl of minestrone soup; plate of mulligan stew; mile-high Dagwood sandwich. In fact, name the batch of questions and answers that begins in a few paragraphs from now anything you wish. But keep in mind that the analogy to food blends is done for effect, a metaphorical method to get to the central focus concerning some seemingly dissimilar but nonetheless intrinsically connected questions about curriculum—especially as curriculum relates to the topic of accountability.

Everyone responsible for instruction and its ultimate outgrowth, which is the measurable quality of an educational program, must cooperate in good faith. But that is obvious. So why the reminder? Because cooperation becomes crucial when thoughts turn to curriculum—the backbone of scholastic endeavor. School board members, while not professionals in the educational sense, all the same are first to take flak from taxpayers about shortcomings in schools. That is why it's incumbent upon board members to ask pointed questions of their superintendent, principals and teachers who work within various echelons of the school district.

Such interrogations should constitute bench-mark-type questions designed to assess how well or how poorly teaching/learning goals are being attained. Ten questions follow that have stood the test in the past; more to the point, however, is that they continue to stand, here and now, ready to be copied or adapted as individual needs of the district dictate:

Program Objectives

Can school board members and interested citizens put their hands (literally) on sets of written objectives for specific programs (such as K-12 math or English), for specific courses (such as American history or drafting), for grade levels (such as third grade science)?

Answer If they cannot, get the proper people hustling so that requests of this sort can be accommodated in the near future. Meanwhile, appoint someone on the district staff to see to it that written objectives include one or more explicit statements describing the purpose of each program, course or grade level; also specify that so-called yardsticks or criteria or standards be spelled out so that laymen can measure a program's performance.

And if you're a bug about propriety, rest assured that it is entirely fitting and proper for board members and the public to request and receive a written set of objectives that outline the purposes of a district's instructional programs. (Refer to *N.J.A.C.* 6:8-3.3 (a), the T & E Law. "The board must set written objectives which will lead to attainment of its Educational goals.")

Foundation Skills

Have the skills, processes, concepts and elements taught in each program, course and grade level been identified and written out?

Answer Every program in the curriculum exposes students to hundreds of academic disciplines. Reading, for example, involves skills such as sound/symbol associations, visual discriminations, prefixes, suffixes, digraphs and comprehension—and those are only starters.

The point is that board members and parents ought to have access to an explanatory list of all foundation skills inherent in each program, the reason being that these skills constitute the very essence of classroom instruction. Absence of specified foundation skills opens the way for program gaps, redundancies, questionable diagnostic and placement accuracy, and downgraded individualized instruction.

Individualized Instruction

Is there a concerted and obvious effort, on a K-12 districtwide basis, to tailor education to an individual's needs?

Answer If the answer is "No" or "I don't know," best you take action promptly to put things straight. Meantime, some of the more obvious indications that individualized instruction is part and parcel of your curriculum are: Learning materials that vary in difficulty; instructional programs that allow students to learn at their own pace; students using materials that commonly are found in previous or advanced grade levels; students gathering knowledge from a variety of sources that are not necessarily the same as those used by their classmates; existence of small learning groups within large classes.

Criterion-Referenced Tests

Are local measures of program quality and effectiveness available right now (or in the offing) for ensuring the most accurate possible diagnosis, placement, and assessment of a student's academic progress?

Answer It's logical to assume that standardized tests too often are improper and ineffective instruments for diagnosing and placing students in instructional programs. Tests are not referenced to local situations, and their use to teachers usually is minimal (if you doubt that, ask a teacher). Inaccurate diagnosis and improper placement of students is a major cause of instructional failure. If student and program test instruments do not furnish accurate data that reflect local program content and conduct, faulty assumptions are sure to follow, culminating in a set of circumstances that bode ill for student learning, teacher satisfaction, and proper maintenance of the instructional program.

Program-Oriented-Budget Systems (POB)

Do the board of education and the community have access to budgetary information that specifies costs of instruction by program, organization level (elementary, middle or junior high and senior high), individual schools, courses, grade levels and item-by-item expenditures?

Answer That long-winded question is only a beginning. Others come to mind: Are costs allocated on the basis of instructional priorities, objectives and long-range planning? Are these cost allocations evident and observable? The queries could go on almost indefinitely, but space in this magazine most assuredly cannot, so enough said. You've got the idea. When the budget-accounting system is bereft of complete data, the result is to magnify if not increase problems inherent in making priority decisions—the types of decisions that always wind up costing more money than the budget provides for.

A properly tuned POB framework helps board members and the superintendent pinpoint costly programs at the outset, recognize the ones that need administrative attention, and retain those that produce results commensurate with the money requested for their expansion or maintenance.

Cost-Effectiveness Analysis

Are studies under way in your district to assess the relative worth (higher achievement at lower costs) of alternatives to present instructional programs, services and activities?

Answer Actually, the central question to be raised here is whether a proposed program will yield an equal or greater return in terms of student achievement and other instructional benefits than will the program in current use. Cost-effectiveness analysis is a

pompous-sounding name for a relatively simple process that helps administrators select the best program, service or procedure in situations where a variety of practical alternatives exist. When new programs are proposed as replacements for existing ones, cost-effective studies—conducted on a modest scale—can provide you with a pragmatic assessment of the feasibility of districtwide adoption before extensive quantities of time and money are committed to the new venture.

Curriculum Study and Design

Does your district allocate basic resources, meaning time and money, to study and design programs for the curriculum? Or is the curriculum merely a conglomeration of textbooks bought by the board?

Answer As you well know, textbooks and related materials are not exactly designed for specific school districts. This fact of contemporary curriculum life means that additions, deletions, cross-correlations, local interpretations (plus many other refinements) are necessary if learning materials are to be tailored to local needs and desires. The school system that brushes aside these housekeeping chores involving curriculum is, in effect, passing the job off onto teachers. The inherent danger in this irresponsible approach—in addition to encroaching further upon teachers' time—is that it encourages fissures in the foundation of the curriculum and could lead to fragmentation of instructional programs.

Curriculum Updating

Are instructional programs reassessed and revised annually to ensure that skills, sequence, learning activities, test instruments and supplemental resources are recognized logically and developed soundly?

Answer Ho-hum is no way to appraise the task implied by this question. The job must be tended to annually if school officials aspire to increase student achievement and maintain teacher commitments to program design. If you forget everything else you've read here, try to remember one thing, which is that the curriculum is never static; its contents and emphasis change constantly. And if you think you have a really contemporary curriculum going in your schools, rule of thumb predicts that it will remain contemporary for approximately three years. After that, it likely will need a total face lifting.

Public Review of Your Instructional Program

Do citizens have the opportunity to look over the contents of the instructional program, as well as express opinions concerning the direction they think instruction should take?

Answer Although boards of education theoretically (and usually in practice) represent the sentiments of their respective publics, there is increasing evidence that broader validation of a school district's endeavors—especially where curriculum is concerned—makes good sense. In other words, by inviting parents and other interested citizens not only to learn more about what's going on within instructional programs, but to offer their observations as well, you'll help to make sure that public commitment and support will be stabilized and enhanced.

Long-Range Management Plan

Does your administrative staff have a three, five or ten year master plan on paper,

one that specifies projected programs, policies, personnel, budget evaluations, services, maintenance and other needs or basic modifications?

Answer Both the school board and community at large ought to be enlightened about what the day-to-day operating staff has in mind for the present and foreseeable future. Documented long-range plans build a base for administrator-board communication and understanding and, at the same time, help minimize the sometimes harmful side effects of conjecturing about what's going to happen next. By virtue of its assigned role in the school district, a board of education clearly has a permanent pledge to the community, whereas the recognized mobility of superintendents, principals and teachers makes them, by definition, a transient group. All of which reinforces the rationale for letting the public know the whole of it—because taxpayers will be left to wrestle with the long-range when it becomes the present. And more likely than not, that will be a time when the professional administrative team that originally devised the grand plan has long gone.

From the American School Board Journal
June, 1981
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Re-Evaluating Courses For The Comprehensive High School

Philip E. Gates

Contemplate a "comprehensive" high school that offers the equivalent of three years of home economics, but no physics; jazz band, but no orchestra; and science fiction literature, but no geography.

Absurd: Yes. Impossible? No.

We in the secondary schools have not had to identify in specific terms what a comprehensive course of study actually is. In this relatively expansive period of our history, nobody has been particularly pressed to answer the question, "What constitutes a comprehensive course of studies?"

Recently, however, the decline in the elementary school population has finally reached the high schools. Between 1972 and 1982, elementary and high school enrollments will have declined 11 percent, down five million young people. As enrollments and corresponding revenues have decreased, so have the number of courses. But the million dollar question is "Which courses are to be cut?" If there were a universally accepted definition of a "comprehensive high school," this question would be much easier to answer. So far, the following factors have helped determine what courses will be taught:

- The state legislature, local school board, and regional colleges and universities have mandated certain courses to be taught all students. These have become required courses. Typically they have included core subject courses, but usually have ignored the fine arts, practical arts, foreign languages, and so on. These latter areas are usually covered in the elective program, which means they have been most expendable. So much for a comprehensive program.
- Special interest groups have pushed for more course offerings in their areas. Business leaders clamor for more economics. Athletic boosters want more physical education. Fine arts councils want more music and drama. Still other groups call for just the opposite: less physical education, health, and music. Too often, these tugs-of-war have been won by the heavyweights with the most prestige, power, or pull.
- Some departments have offered wider varieties of elective courses than others. Consequently, the "elective departments" have appealed to the larger number of students who are attracted by elective course packages. An English or social studies department, for example, can offer 15 or 20 courses of one title one semester, and another 15 or 20 second term. Availability of more courses ensures a greater number of students to be taught in those areas. Another trick has been to tie a less popular course together with a more popular one and require that they be taken in a package deal.
- Farsighted staff have found ways to increase their student clientele: increase prerequisite course requirements; hyphenate single semester courses to include a second semester course; include a required course of 9 to 18 weeks in a 36-week elective course. Advisors for student councils, newspapers, and year-books have required one or more courses that must be taken concurrently with the club activity. Athletes have been told they must participate in out-of-season training sessions by enrolling in certain physical education courses.
- Tenured or seniority of staff members has dictated what courses are taught in elective areas. As a staff is reduced the most tenured teachers stay, so their courses are retained. The less experienced teachers go, and so do their courses.
- Facilities have also dictated which courses are continued and which are not. A business practice course in which there has been a heavy financial investment in a set of standard business machines has had a better chance of being continued than a course requiring no overhead other than a classroom with chalk. In this situation, gym, industrial arts, home economics, band, art, business education, and science have had the edge on math, English, social studies, and foreign language.

Establishment of a Study Commission

Anticipating a rapidly declining school population and aware of some of the program problems it might create, the Scottsdale Board of Trustees mandated a total review of its high school program of studies. A 46-member commission was appointed to make recommendations to the board within three years on what should be included in a comprehensive course of studies.

The commission consisted of 15 students elected by their peers (three from each of the five high schools); 15 parents appointed by the president of the executive board of the district's parent-teacher council (three from each high school); and 15 teachers, counselors, and administrators appointed by the administration. Each served as a voting member. The forty-sixth member, who chaired the group, was the assistant superintendent for secondary education. Attendance was taken at all meetings, and chronically absent members were replaced. All meetings were conducted in public, and visitors were permitted to participate in discussions. Business was conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order. Members were assured that initial recommendations passed by majority would be reconsidered at least two additional times prior to an eventual ratification vote. Also, as peripheral but important items came up, they were put on a "hold" list and discussed at a later date. These parameters helped relieve members of apprehensions that their areas of concern would be brushed aside.

Strict adherence to these guidelines was critical to the eventual success of the commission study. Once sessions began, they were wide open. Divergent points of view were expressed. Discussions were freewheeling, articulate, dull, exciting, even humorous on occasion. Emotions peaked. Participants often became frustrated in failing to win support for their personal points of view when they were exposed to the perceptive scrutiny of the group. Various special interest groups argued in support of retention or expansion of their areas of particular concern. Staff groups challenged the commission's authority, questioning its qualifications to make curriculum decisions in areas in which it had no experience. Despite these factors, throughout the three-year effort, the commission managed to maintain a businesslike posture, making difficult decisions with integrity. As one astute commission member observed in retrospect, "We took the politics out of educational decision making."

Review Format

The format for the review included the following step-by-step procedures:

Establishment of a Common Background In September, 1976, a written mandate from the Board of Trustees ordering the program review was presented to the commission. Written copies of the district philosophy of education; postgraduate follow-up results; community needs survey responses; North Central Accreditation Association visitation reports; and achievement, ACT, and SAT test scores were reviewed in oral presentations to the group.

Creation of an Agreed-Upon Frame of Reference for Evaluating the Net Worth of Each High School Course A "Course Rating Sheet" was discussed and approved by the commission. The course rating sheet included five broad areas and a set of 31 criteria: (a) Levels of Appropriateness (conforms to school district philosophy of education, meets the requirements of the scope and sequence, and so on); (b) Content Validity (written course goals are available, curriculum materials relate to course goals and objectives, course contributes to the development of the larger subject matter discipline in which it belongs, and so on); (c) Course Effectiveness (students successfully completing the course have acquired basic skills in reading, writing, and/or computation; students successfully completing course have acquired or refined skills that can be used to earn

a living and/or take care of themselves throughout life, and so on); (d) Resource Availability (qualified teachers, required texts/materials/equipment, and so on); (e) Budget Support (teachers, support staff, facilities, and so on). Each course was ranked "high," "low," "medium," or "not applicable" on each criterion.

After the presentation of the courses for the first subject area, industrial arts, commission members recognized that the process was too cumbersome. After that, they decided to analyze each course with those criteria appropriate for the particular course under study. A set of course descriptions including course titles, primary content focus, prerequisites, ability level, and grade level were distributed for all courses.

Organization of a Schedule for Considering All 350 Courses Representing 12 Disciplines

There were seven "rounds" of activity engaged in by the commission. These activities and the approximate amount of time taken for each included:

- **Round #1 (25 sessions)**—A course-by-course presentation was made by department heads and subject matter teachers. This was followed by discussion and formulation of first draft recommendations. Typically this took two evening sessions per subject area.

- **Round #2 (10 sessions)**—All of the tentative recommendations were reviewed collectively within the context of the complete first draft. Focus here was on relationships among departments, program balance (for example, adequate number of offerings per subject, adequate number of levels of courses, balance between college preparation and vocational courses, and so on). Second draft recommendations were then proposed, discussed, and approved.

- **Round #3 (2 sessions, two and a half hours)**—Public hearings were held. Individuals from the community were invited to comment on any of the second draft recommendations, which had been distributed to all high school staff. Specific times were scheduled for each subject area upon request. Most of those who chose to speak were teacher groups. In all cases those who presented reactions to the second draft recommendations spoke against those that threatened their vested interests. The hearings included teacher presentations and appeals to recommendations in eight subject matter areas.

- **Round #4 (2 sessions)**—Hearing presentations were reviewed by the commission. A third draft of recommendations was discussed and approved. Important changes were made in two subject matter areas in draft three as a result of the hearings.

- **Round #5 (1 session)**—Ratification of the final document was considered. The vote was unanimous, one of only two unanimous votes by the commission throughout its three-year life span.

- **Round #6 (1 session, three hours)**—An informal work session was held with the Board of Trustees. Members of the public and the board asked questions and commented about various aspects of the report. At least two teachers' groups appealed to the board for alterations in the commission's recommendations.

- **Round #7 (1 session)**—The final presentation of the recommendations was made to the Board of Trustees. Three amendments to the commission report were initiated and approved by the board before it unanimously approved the final document in its entirety.

The Net Result

Major changes that will be implemented as the result of the approval of the commission's recommendations include the following:

1. The present 20 units required for graduation will be retained, but the number of required courses will increase from 9 to 11 units. The two new required units are one unit in practical arts (industrial arts, business education, or home economics), and one unit in humanities (foreign language or fine arts—music, art, dance, or drama).
2. All 350 courses have been put in priority order within three broad categories. This will enable the district to identify courses that must be taught in order to retain a comprehensive program ("Requisite Courses"); courses that are to be offered at registration time but taught only if there are a minimum of 20 students per section enrolled ("Standard Courses"); and courses that are desirable but not necessary ("Optional Elective Courses"). Optional electives will be offered only if there is staff available after all requisite and standard course requirements have been met. Spanish I,II,III, and IV, for example, have been declared requisite courses. French I, II, and III; German I and II; and Latin I and II are standard courses. French IV; German III and IV; and Latin III and IV are optional electives. It is the intention of the commission that no standard courses may be staffed in any of five district schools until all requisite courses have been adequately staffed in all high schools. Also, no optional elective course may be staffed until all standard courses that meet board prescribed minimum enrollments have been staffed. The consequence of this is that some electives with larger enrollments will have to defer to smaller-sized standard courses.
3. Four years of English classes have been assigned requisite classification, thereby assuring every student who needs four years of English (even though the district requires only three for graduation) will get it no matter how small the high school becomes. Similar program guarantees as prescribed by the requisite listing include four years of a foreign language, science, math, and music; three years of industrial arts, home economics, and business education; three years of social studies, a semester of driver/health education, one year of physical education, and two years of a vocational education program at the technical school. It is important to note that "requisite courses" are not synonymous with "required courses." Students do not have to enroll in requisite courses, but they are assured that the courses will be available should they need them.

Other Amendments

At its final meeting on the matter, the board made some changes in the final document, including requiring a minimum of 20 students in a requisite course section before it can be offered.

That definitely runs counter to what the commission was attempting to do; that is, to make absolutely certain that courses deemed essential to a comprehensive program be taught no matter how small the school population might become. In the commission's view, failure to offer the requisite courses is a failure to offer a comprehensive high school program.

The board evidently decided that was too big a jump to take. Instead, by virtue of its vote, the board invoked the district standard of 20 students minimum per course section for all courses. Should one of the requisite offerings fall below that, the board has the option of reviewing the matter individually. At that time it will have the option

to fund the undersubscribed course or to rule that it is not part of the comprehensive program of studies as defined by the commission. If students in a particular high school cannot be afforded a comprehensive program of studies, serious consideration to closing that high school is in order.

Regardless, the new graduation requirements have survived. Vested interests have been put aside. Student's needs have been paramount. The integrity of the high school course of study will remain intact even during economically adverse times.

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Evaluation of the Chief School Administrator

N.J.A.C. 6:3-1.22 Evaluation of tenured chief school administrators

(a) Every district board of education shall adopt a policy and implementation procedures requiring the annual evaluation of the tenured chief school administrator by the district board of education.

(b) The purpose of the annual evaluation shall be to:

1. Promote professional excellence and improve the skills of the tenured chief school administrator;
2. Improve the quality of the education received by the pupils served by the public schools;
3. Provide a basis for the review of the performance of the tenured chief school administrator.

(c) Such policy and procedures shall be developed by each district board of education after consultation with the tenured chief school administrator and shall include, but not be limited to:

1. A determination of roles and responsibilities for the implementation of the policy and procedures;
2. Development of a job description and evaluation criteria, based upon the district's local goals, program objectives, policies, instructional priorities, state goals, statutory requirements, and the functions, duties and responsibilities of the tenured chief school administrator;
3. Specification of methods of data collection and reporting appropriate to the job description;
4. Provision for the preparation of an individual plan for professional growth and development based in part upon any needs identified in the evaluation, which shall be mutually developed by the district board of education and the tenured chief school administrator;
5. Preparation of an annual written performance report by a majority of the full membership of the district board of education and an annual summary conference between the district board of education, with a majority of the total membership of the board and the tenured chief school administrator present.

(d) Nothing shall preclude a district board of education, at its discretion, from hiring a qualified consultant to assist or advise in the evaluation process; however, the evaluation itself is the responsibility of the district board of education.

(e) Such policy shall be distributed to the tenured chief school administrator upon adoption. Amendments to the policy shall be distributed within 10 working days after adoption.

(f) The annual summary conference between the district board of education, with a majority of the total membership of the board and the tenured chief school administrator present, shall be held before the written performance report is filed. The conference shall be held in private, unless the tenured chief school administrator requests that it be held in public. The conference shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Review of the performance of the tenured chief school administrator based upon the job description;
2. Review of the tenured chief school administrator's progress in achieving and/or implementing the district's goals, program objectives, policies, instructional priorities, State goals and statutory requirements;
3. Review of available indicators of pupil progress and growth toward the program objectives.

(g) The annual written performance report shall be prepared by April 30 by a majority of the total membership of the district board of education and shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Performance areas of strength;
2. Performance areas needing improvement based upon the job description and evaluation criteria set forth in N.J.A.C. 6:3-1.22(c)2;
3. Recommendations for professional growth and development;
4. A summary of available indicators of pupil progress and growth and a statement of how these available indicators relate to the effectiveness of the overall program and the performance of the tenured chief school administrator;
5. Provision for performance data which have not been included in the report prepared by the board of education to be entered into the record by the tenured chief school administrator within 10 working days after the completion of the report.

(h) These provisions are the minimum requirements for the evaluation of tenured chief school administrators.

(i) For purposes of this section:

1. "Chief school administrator" is defined in N.J.A.C. 6:3-1.3.
2. "Available indicators of pupil progress and growth" mean the results of formal and informal assessment of pupils as defined in N.J.A.C. 6:8-3.4.
3. "Job description" means a written specification of the functions, duties and responsibilities of the tenured chief school administrator and the relationship of such functions, duties and responsibilities to those of the district board of education.

(j) Nothing in this section shall preclude a district board of education from applying these rules to nontenured chief school administrators.

R.1979 d.480, eff. December 7, 1979, becoming operational on September 1, 1980.
See: 11 N.J.R. 536(b), 12 N.J.R. 7(a).
As amended, R.1983 d.248, 0ff. June 20, 1983.
See: 15 N.J.R. 376(a), 15 N.J.R. 1016(b).

Added "district" to board of education. Changed definition of "chief school administrator" to as defined in N.J.A.C. 6:3-1.3.

Chief School Administrator Job Description

CHIEF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR JOB DESCRIPTION

QUALIFICATIONS:

1. Experience in teaching and school administration totaling at least 10 years.
2. An earned master's degree with a major in educational administration; completion of one year of graduate work beyond the master's degree preferred.
3. New Jersey Certification—School Administrator *N.J.A.C.* 6:11-9.1, -9.2,-10.2, -10.4, -10.6, -10.7.
4. Such alternatives to the above qualifications as the Board may find appropriate and acceptable.

STATUTORY REFERENCE:

N.J.S.A. 18A:17-15 through -24

REPORTS TO:

Board of Education

SUPERVISES:

Directly or indirectly, every district employee.

FUNCTION:

The Superintendent shall serve as the executive officer of the Board of Education and shall be responsible for the administration and general supervision of the total school district in accordance with Board policies and New Jersey Statutes.

PERFORMANCE RESPONSIBILITIES:

I. Related to District Goals

A. Educational Outcome Goals

The Superintendent shall cause to be developed those instructional programs which will bear a meaningful relationship to present and future needs and interests of pupils.

B. Educational Process Goals

The Superintendent shall supervise the instructional programs to assure that they provide for the needs and interests of pupils.

II. District Program Objective

The Superintendent shall assure that program instruction is commensurate with the abilities of individual students.

III. Related to Instructional Priorities

The Superintendent shall oversee the development of educational experiences that are consistent with the age of the students.

IV. Related to State Goals

The Superintendent shall supervise those procedures which assure that the students acquire basic skills in obtaining information, solving problems, thinking critically and communicating effectively.

continued

V. Related to Board of Education Goals

A. Outcome Goals

1. The Board of Education will identify areas of concern and needs to be addressed for the following year.
2. The Superintendent will take the Board proposal and, with staff and other resources, convert their concerns and needs into goals.

B. Process Goals

1. The Superintendent shall implement Board of Education goals adhering to requested time-lines.
2. The Superintendent shall prepare a monthly and annual report.

VI. Statutory Responsibilities

The Superintendent shall:

A. Report to the Board of Education re: educational program and maintenance of district facilities—*N.J.S.A.* 18A:17-20;

B. Serve as non-voting member of Board of Education—*N.J.S.A.* 18A:17-20;

C. Provide general supervision of district schools—*N.J.S.A.* 18A:17-20;

D. Assume supervision of district instruction—*N.J.A.C.* 6:3-1.12(b);

E. Select and recommend all textbooks, equipment, supplies, and other educational materials for Board approval—*N.J.A.C.* 6:3-1.12(f);

F. Visit district schools to keep informed of conditions and progress—*N.J.A.C.* 6:3-1.12(a);

G. Report to the commissioner and county superintendent on or before August 1 of each year on matters relating to the district school in a form directed by the commissioner—*N.J.S.A* 18A:17-21;

H. Be responsibile for discipline and conduct of the school—*N.J.A.C.* 6:3-1.12(b);

I. Have authority to suspend staff—*N.J.S.A.* 18A:25-6;

J. Have authority to appoint office personnel—*N.J.A.C.* 6:3-1.12(d);

K. Have authority to nominate assistant superintendent *N.J.A.C.* 6:3-1.12(c);

L. Ascertain teacher certification—*N.J.A.C.* 6:3-1.12(g);

M. Report to the Board progress of the district in complying with equal educational opportunity/affirmative action mandates—*N.J.A.C.* 6:4-1.3(c);

N. Direct the development of policies and procedures to accomplish the evaluation of all tenured teaching staff members. *N.J.A.C.* 6:3-1.21;

O. Implement all state requirements and district policies related to Ch.212, P.L. 1975 (*N.J.A.C.* 6:8).

VII. Related to the functions, Duties and Responsibilities of the Superintendent.

The Superintendent shall:

A. Attend and participate in all meetings of the Board except when own appointment, efficiency, contract or salary is being considered, and serve as an ex officio member of all Board Committees;

B. Advise the Board of need for new or revised policy and prepare policy drafts for Board approval;

C. Exercise power to make such rules and give such instructions to school employees and students as may be necessary to implement Board policy;

D. Act on own discretion if action is necessary in any matter not covered by Board policy, report such action to the Board as soon as practicable and prepare draft policy for review, modification if necessary, and adoption by the Board;

E. See to the efficient maintenance and dissemination of all district policy documents;

continued

F. Prepare and submit to the Board recommendations related to all matters requiring Board action and inform the Board of all activities operating under the Board's authority;

G. Delegate at own discretion to other employees of the Board the exercise of any powers or the discharge of any duties with the knowledge that the delegation of power or duty does not relieve the Superintendent of final responsibility for the action taken under such delegation;

H. Maintain adequate records for the school, including system of financial accounts; business and property records; and personnel, school population, and scholastic records; act as custodian of such records and of all contracts, securities, documents, title papers, books of records, and other papers belonging to the Board;

I. Recommend for promotion, appointment, or employment all employees of the Board, and assign, transfer, and recommend for dismissal any and all employees of the Board;

J. Direct the preparation of the annual budget for adoption by the Board, and administer the budget as enacted by the Board, acting at all times in accordance with legal requirements and adopted Board policies;

K. Direct staff negotiations with professional and nonprofessional personnel;

L. Communicate directly or through delegation all actions of the Board relating to personnel matters to all employees; and receive from employees all communications to be made to the Board;

M. Represent the schools before the public and maintain, through cooperative leadership both within and without the schools, such a program of publicity and public relations as may keep the public informed as to the activities, needs, and successes of the school;

N. Attend or delegate a representative to attend all meetings of municipal, county and state agencies at which matters pertaining to the school district appear on the agenda or are expected to be raised;

O. Represent the district in its dealings with other school systems;

P. Conduct a continuous evaluation of the progress and the needs of the school; keep the Board informed of results of evaluation and measures taken to improve the district's educational environment;

Q. Make recommendations to the Board concerning transportation of pupils in accordance with the law and the requirements of safety;

R. Make recommendations with reference to the location and size of new school sites and of additions to existing sites, the location and size of new buildings on school sites; the plans for new school buildings; all appropriations for sites and buildings; and improvements, alterations, and changes in the buildings and equipment of the district;

S. Recommend to the Board sales of all property no longer required by the board, and supervise the proper execution of such sales;

T. Keep informed of modern educational thought and practices by advanced study, by visiting school systems elsewhere, by attending educational conferences, and by other appropriate means, and keep the Board informed of trends in education;

U. Perform such other tasks as may from time to time be assigned by the Board.

V. Act as chief fiscal officer, which includes maintenance of financial control of the school budget in accordance with Board policy and state regulations.

Date: November 16, 1981

NJSBA SCHOOL POLICY SERVICE
New Jersey School Boards Association, P.O. Box 909, Trenton, New Jersey 08605
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Progress Toward Objectives

A process by which a board can effectively evaluate their chief school administrator.

STEP ONE: Set The Objectives

Objectives, sometime called "job targets", can come from several sources. They can:

(1) result from T&E needs assessments,

(2) be identified by looking at the superintendent's job description and deciding what needs to be done in each area of responsibility,

(3) emerge from discussions expressly held to set them,

(4) be suggested by the superintendent.

Regardless of its source, an objective will be a statement of *what* the superintendent is expected to accomplish and *by when.* Objectives should be determined with the superintendent. One of the things the board needs to know is whether the objective is realistic. Information from the superintendent is very valuable in making this judgment. It is important to note that when the board and the superintendent disagree about an objective, the board has the final say. It's also important to remember that if the objective is a bad one there can be consequences for the board and the district as well as the superintendent. We'll assume that good faith and reasonableness will prevail and move on to the next step.

STEP TWO: The Superintendent Takes The Proposed Objectives And, With The Administrative Team, Develops An Action Plan For Each Objective. Each Action Plan Describes:

(1) the major activities involved in achieving the objective;

(2) when each major activity will be accomplished;

(3) the resources required; and

(4) what events or products will indicate that the objective has been achieved.

STEP THREE: The Board Reviews Each Plan And, Through Discussion, It Is Approved, Modified Or Dropped For Some Reason.

This time we'll assume the worst. Either no plans are presented or they are totally unacceptable. If plans are not presented by an established date for no acceptable reason, the superintendent is insubordinate. If the plans are unacceptable, the board directs that they be revised by an established date, and is very specific about the revisions. Hopefully the worst won't happen. But, if it does, there is a record which can serve as the basis for a personnel action. Having too quickly treated what might occur in an historically bad board/superintendent relationship we now assume the best. Action plans have been reviewed and approved. The board directs the superintendent to implement the plan.

STEP FOUR: Over The Course Of Time The Superintendent Provides The Board With Progress Reports.

The path toward accomplishing the objectives has already been laid out in the action plan. Target dates for the major activities serve as the schedule for progress reports. Through the progress reports the board monitors implementation of the plans. A regular flow of information has developed. Sometimes progress reports will indicate the need for a "course correction". Not only is this OK—it is desirable. Making judgements on the basis of information while something is in progress is called "formative" evaluation. The purpose of formative evaluation is to insure that plans stay on target—rather than waiting until the target has been missed and then trying to determine why it was missed.

In formative evaluation, the superintendent's evaluation program has been merged with the board's governance responsibility.

STEP FIVE: "Summative Evaluation".

(1) Did the superintendent do his/her job?

(2) Did the superintendent fulfill his/her responsibilities?

(3) Did the superintendent accomplish his/her objectives to the board's satisfaction?

The board's responsibility is to determine whether it is satisfied with the progress made toward the objectives. Progress is continuous. Sometimes, even with formative evaluation, an objective will not be achieved. Sometimes an objective will have been only partially achieved. The superintendent's responsibility in such instances is to provide a satisfactory explanation as to why. The board must collectively judge whether the reasons given for not meeting the objective are satisfactory. Satisfaction is a value judgement. At this point, the evaluation process clearly becomes subjective. If the system has been working right, this should not happen too often. But, when it does, the board must recognize its roles and responsibilities and, if necessary by majority vote, make up its collective mind.

Some Words of Caution

This approach to superintendent evaluation will not happen overnight. It requires patience, commitment, and lots of common sense. It's easiest to start and work with when there is a good board/superintendent relationship; where there exists respect for the difference between governance and management and a commom understanding of their proper interaction. Where trusts exists, the evaluation program can help to maintain it. Where there are problems, it may help to remedy them. Come judgment day the board and its superintendent should have information about the board's performance, the superintendent's demonstration of executive skills, and the district's progress towards its objectives. That's a fairly substantial basis for decisions. It does not guarantee that your decision will be the best one—but it should give the board more than a little confidence that it has taken its best shot.

NEW JERSEY SCHOOL POLICY SERVICE

Self-Evaluation: A Major Board Responsibility

Peter Rosamilia

The responsibilities of the local school board are monumental in scope and far-reaching in their effect and influence. Each year shows the public becoming increasingly involved in, and concerned with, the role of the local board of education in the governance of the schools. As the social institution which is acknowledged to be the possession of all the people, the schools are being held culpable for society's ills. The expansion of knowledge is occurring at a rate which is difficult to comprehend. Those most directly involved in the education of children—the teachers—are demanding more and more employee rights from boards.

The role of the board is not easy. It is complex and wearing, demanding and arduous. Coping with the task requires direction, a sense of purpose, and leadership of the highest order.

How does the board know it is fulfilling its role? How does it know it is fulfilling its role effectively? Although the board spends a good deal of its time in the evaluation of others, often the only assessment it ever undergoes is that which occurs in the voting booths when board members run for re-election. Needless to say, this process has little, if anything, to do with improving the effectiveness of the board's functioning. In an era when accountability seems to be the byword, boards must not labor under the erroneous assumption that the word exists only for those who deal with children on a day-to-day basis—that accountability stops at the superintendent's office. It does not! As the body most directly responsible for the governance of the school system, the board is not, and cannot be, absolved from a critical look at its operation.

One method of assessing the board's effectiveness is the self-evaluation technique. Self-evaluation is introspective; it requires, by its very title, that the evaluation be done not be outside individuals or consultants, but rather by the board members themselves—*those involved in, and responsible for,* the success or failure of the board as it strives to give the school system direction and purpose.

Self-evaluation is a *positive* process. It highlights what is being done effectively. It provides the board with the best opportunity to identify strengths—and take a well-earned, infrequently-received, collective pat on the back! It is not a witch hunt, designed to point an accusatory finger at any individual or group. Any such project is doomed to failure.

While on the one hand self-evaluation serves to highlight strengths, it also provides the mechanism for spotting weaknesses. When the weaknesses are identified, what follows next is a basic human desire—the desire to improve. If the board gets to the point of airing what it identifies as a failing or defect in its functioning, it will want to correct the problem. Improvement is facilitated; board members are motivated to work for betterment, both of themselves and of the board.

What is perhaps even more important is that self-evaluation provides the yardstick against which the future performance of the board will be measured. Regardless of what method the board chooses to assess its own performance, the resulting evaluative instrument, however simple or complex, becomes a standard against which the board can gauge its performance.

In its most rudimentary form, self-evaluation is asking yourself, "How well are we doing?" If the board assumes its role to be the approval of bills and the development of the budget, then the question can be answered simply with minimal investigation. If, on the other hand, the board sees its role inextricably tied to the very success or failure of the school district, if it sees itself as the helmsman, charting both the purpose and direction of the district through the establishment of goals and objectives, and discharging its responsibilities to the fullest extent allowed by the law, then the question becomes, "How well are we doing *compared to what we are expected to do?*"; a more demanding standard which requires a considerably greater commitment.

Somewhere between the two extremes lies the self-evaluation technique that is right for your board. The decision must be made by the entire board. Under no circumstance should any method, technique, or instrument be imposed upon the board by one individual or group.

Once the board has made the commitment to examine its operation, it must then decide the process by which it will accomplish the task. There are a number of techniques available.

An analysis of the minutes of board meetings can often yield startling facts about how much time and attention is devoted to such matters as curriculum, evaluation, allocation of resources, formulation of policy, and the setting of goals and objectives. Although such an analysis might indeed form the sole basis for a self-evaluation, it is best to include it as a part of the total self-evaluation process.

Periodic examination of goals and objectives (required under T&E laws) can provide the basis for a self-evaluation program. "How appropriate are our goals and objectives?" "To what degree have they been accomplished?" "Which ones can or must be carried over for additional effort?" Although such an examination concerns itself with one of the most vital roles of the board, it is limited in scope in terms of the board's responsibilities and should therefore constitute one element of the self-evaluation package.

A less formal method involves the assessment of comments and criticisms of constituents. "How vocal is the public?" "What do they have to say about the management of the schools?" "What are their concerns about the financial requirements to operate the schools?" "What appears to be the crux of public complaints?" An assessment of the confidence placed in the board by the public can provide the backdrop for a critical look at the board's functioning. Most popular among the various self-evaluation techniques is the questionnaire. The questionnaire makes the process more manageable by providing the questions (or statements) against which the board is able to appraise its own performance. Questionnaires, or self-appraisal instruments, exist in many forms. Some are lengthy and all-inclusive—others are designed to be used to measure effectiveness in just one facet of the board's operational procedure.

The board should decide whether to use one of the many available instruments in its entirety, extract various elements from several instruments, or devise one to suit its own needs. Once a form has been devised, it can be embellished upon and fine-tuned annually or as often as the board evaluates itself, each time being modified to more accurately reflect the changing needs of the district. Items which do not apply should be removed; those which have not been addressed in the past should be added.

Completion of the form or questionnaire should be required of all board members as well as those who regularly sit with the board, such as the superintendent, the board secretary, the business official, etc. Although the board may delegate that responsibility to a committee, it is less desirable than having all participate. If the responsibility is given to a committee, a complete report of the committee's findings is an essential component in the evaluation process. In either case, responses to the items must be supported by evidence and not made in the heat of emotion.

If a board member refuses to participate in the process, it is important for the others to attempt to convince him of the importance of the activity and the need for his perceptions. Failing in this, the board should proceed without the non-participating member.

What happens after all the forms are completed and all the information is collected? Then comes the most important step in the process—identifying weaknesses and planning to improve. In addition, it is important to acknowledge the areas of strength and plan to capitalize upon them and reinforce them. The discussion that ensues when the infor-

mation is analyzed is the catalyst for further action. It is then that the board seeks, either through inservice programs or other means, to embark upon a planned path to improvement.

Self-evaluation should be an annual event. If it does not occur at least that often the board is not assessing its performance often enough. Evaluation is an on-going process, occurring continually, but must be formalized at least once a year. The optimum time is after the new board members have had sufficient time to become familiar enough with their responsibilities to respond knowledgeably to the questions or statements.

Yes, self-evaluation is a luxury. But it is a luxury you cannot afford to be without. Don't fall into the trap of claiming, "We don't have enough time. There are other more important things to do." Nonsense! Time must be deliberately set aside. There are a number of time-saving techniques that will not impair the effectiveness of the self-evaluation program, but will enable the board to get through the task without any wasted time.

Technical assistance is available from the Field Services Department of the NJSBA. Local field representatives will provide you with sample forms, assist you in developing your own, assist with analyzing the results, help plan improvement programs, and generally, take you through this entire process.

If school board members are ready to acknowledge the prominent role they play in our society, then they should be prepared to insure that their role and that of the board of education is carried out in the most effective manner possible. Whether education succeeds or fails depends in large measure upon the effectiveness of the local school board. The board must stand ready to insure the success of its schools by willingly accepting one of its major responsibilities—self-evaluation.

Board Self Evaluation: The Process

Toby R. Simon,
Inservice Education Department

Your board wants to conduct a self-evaluation. You understand the importance of doing so and the advantages to the board and the community (see previous article, "Self-Evaluation: A Major Board Responsibility"). But how do you proceed? How do you go about evaluating yourself without turning the whole thing into a witch hunt? How do you discuss areas needing improvement without embarrassing board members or administrators? In other words, how do you get past the fear factor?

The answer? Lay out a process which specifies exactly what is going to be done and how and why, make sure that everyone clearly understands the process, and then keep to it.

What follows is a suggested scenario of how you might proceed. No one approach is suited for all boards. Each district has its own method of operating, its own traditions and idiosyncrasies. The more its process of self-evaluation takes these into account, the more successful it will be. A general outline of activities, however, can be useful as a guide from which revisions can be made.

This article assumes that most or all of the board members have agreed to participate in the self-evaluation. They have agreed that it is to be a positive process with the same goals as staff and administrative evaluations: to point out strengths to be continued, to determine whether there are weaknesses, and to lay out steps for improving any weaknesses they find. They have come to a consensus on the process and don't feel that it is being imposed on them by a few.

So where do you start? It is a good idea to review the agendas or minutes of the past year's meetings. Look at the items discussed. How much time was spent on education—matters of curriculum or program evaluation? How much time did the board spend reviewing its policies and determining new ones? What percentage of the meetings was given over to budget issues and bills? Were there any presentations by staff and/or students during the year? Were many items the result of last-minute crises rather than long range planning? You can get a good idea of where a board's priorities are as opposed to where it might prefer them to be by a review of this kind. This task can be assigned to a subcommittee of the board. Their findings of time spent would be brought to the whole board for discussion during the part of the process where goals for the coming year are developed. These goals would relate to agenda development and efforts to expand the time spent on educational issues and policies as opposed to busy work and what I call "stage curtain" items.

You will want to use a questionnaire. Such an instrument will tell you what your board thinks of the effectiveness of its operations in those areas covered. The questionnaire at the end of this article is an example of the type we have found useful. It includes questions on use of board policy, agenda development, information received from administrators, board discussions, board committees, community relations, long-range planning, orientation of board members, and board relations among themselves and between the board and administration. It uses what is called a Likert scale—numbers from 1 to 6 which allow responders to record their opinions. When all evaluation forms have been completed, a mean can be determined for each question which more accurately represents the view of the board than do labels such as "All The Time", "Most Of The Time", "Some of the Time", etc. This questionnaire should be revised, of course, to suit the individual districts. Every board has its unique qualities. Boards who work as a whole will not need questions about committee activities. Boards with active committees may want to add questions about how those committees are carrying out their responsibilities. Type I boards may find questions about their relationship with the Board of School Estimate useful. If you want to review additional samples, NJSBA's Management Information Department can send them to you.

When you have the questionnaire exactly as you want it, distribute it to all board

members and to those administrators who regularly participate in board meetings. These latter would include, at a minimum, the chief school administrator and the board secretary. Individual boards might also include the board attorney, assistant superintendents, and others who sit with them at the board table. Everyone would be asked to complete the form, giving their opinions honestly. Respondents should indicate what they see as the reality of a situation, rather than an ideal they would like to be true. A deadline should be set for return of the completed forms. Two weeks would probably be sufficient.

The board should appoint a board member, board committee, or an administrator involved in the process to collect the completed evaluations. They will need to have the means determined (if the Likert scale has been used) or checkmarks totaled (if the questionnaire uses that format). Strengths and weaknesses indicated by the returns should be compiled. The chart that follows is a simple and clear means of doing this.

AREA	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Policy	Existing policies followed.	Matters discussed are not always referenced to policy.
	Policies updated.	
	Existing policies available to public.	
Agenda	Agenda materials received in time for review by board.	Board president not sufficiently involved in development.
		Items are brought to the table other than through the agenda process

Even though less than the entire board may be involved in compiling the results, all forms should be available for any board members to review if they wish. The whole board will also want to validate the strengths and weaknesses listed if such information is given to them.

Now comes the important part. The board and administrators must use the information to develop goals and objectives for the coming year. They will want to continue doing whatever it is which contributes to their strong points. And they will want to decide how they will work to improve the areas which need changing. Priorities may have to be determined. Everything cannot be done at once—especially if the board decides that the administration should do it. Staff already have their own goals for the year and the board must take care not to overburden them with board matters. Decisions must be made about which items should be tackled first and what is a reasonable amount of time for them to be accomplished. Some objectives can be accomplished right away. Others may take months or even be continued into the following year. And everyone should be clear on who is responsible for carrying out the objectives. With most of them, of course, it will be the responsibility of the entire board to work at improvement.

To sum up, the steps a board will go through in conducting a self-evaluation are:

1. Review meeting agendas and minutes.
2. Develop questionnaire.
3. Complete questionnaire and compile results.
4. Determine strengths and weaknesses.
5. Develop goals and objectives to improve areas of weakness. Include timelines and person(s) responsible.

If you would like any help with the process, or further information about board self-evaluation, your Field Service Representative will be glad to provide it.

NJSBA Board Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

For each question, please indicate your response by circling *one* number in each scale.

1. Items brought to the board for action include the chief school administrator's recommendations.

   1 2 3 4 5 6
   Always Never

2. Matters not related to policy-making are referred to the administration for handling.

   1 2 3 4 5 6
   Always Never

3. The board attorney is consulted on appropriate matters and his opinions made known to the board.

   1 2 3 4 5 6
   Always Never

4. Matters to be acted upon have been reviewed and discussed by the board at a meeting prior to the one at which action is to be taken.

   1 2 3 4 5 6
   Always Never

5. Board members receive materials at least two full days before a board meeting.

   1 2 3 4 5 6
   Always Never

6. New items are brought to the board through the agenda process.

   1 2 3 4 5 6
   Always Never

7. Board members wait to be called on by the president before speaking.

   1 2 3 4 5 6
   Always Never

8. Board discussions are kept to the issue on the table.

   1 2 3 4 5 6
   Always Never

9. All board members have an equal opportunity to present their views on the issues.

   1 2 3 4 5 6
   Always Never

10. Board members and administrators have a clear understanding of the disposition of an issue before the board moves on to the next topic.

    1 2 3 4 5 6
    Always Never

11. If the board has committees, notes of their meetings are distributed to all members not on the committees.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

12. Board members receive complete background information on the budget before making decisions.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

13. Board members are involved appropriately in curriculum decisions, including acting publicly on all changes in courses as required by law.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

14. Board members are provided personnel recommendations so that they have sufficient time for discussion, prior to the April 30th deadline, before having to notify staff of renewal and salary withholding decisions.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

15. Input from staff is sought by the board before decisions affecting them are made.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

16. A formal program is conducted to orient newly elected or appointed board members to their responsibilities and to acquaint them with board policies, operating procedures, and administrative staff.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

17. The board actively seeks community reaction and opinion before making major policy decisions.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

18. There is a formal, written process for board members to get items on a meeting agenda.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Yes					No

19. The board has long-range plans for facility use, curriculum, and staffing which are reviewed and up-dated on a regular basis.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Yes					No

20. The board sets goals and establishes performance objectives for the chief school administrator during each year's superintendent evaluation.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Yes					No

21. If the board has committees, their charges and areas of responsibilities are clearly understood by all board members.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Yes					No

22. Information supplied to the board by the administration is as full and complete as possible.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

23. The board sets realistic timelines for information requested of staff.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

24. The board is clear about and agreed upon the nature and form of information required of their chief school administrator.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

25. Requests for information on agenda items are channelled through the board president, chief school administrator, or board secretary.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

26. The board appreciates the efforts of its administrators.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

27. Effective communications exist between the board and its central administrators.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

28. There is mutual trust and respect among members of the board for each other, even when disagreeing on individual issues.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

29. The members of the board work together as a smoothly functioning team.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

30. All board members are treated as important participants of the group.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

31. Members of the board listen to each other with interest and understanding.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

32. All board members have substantial input into the decisions which affect the district.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

33. The opinions of parents are highly regarded by board members.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always					Never

Legislation And The Role Of The Board Member

Marianne E. Rhodes

In addition to your role as a local board of education member, it is becoming increasingly important for you to be aware of what's happening on the state and federal levels regarding education. Gone are the days when school boardsmanship was confined to district boundaries. Today, there are many issues at the state and federal levels which affect local school governance. As public officials, your voices must be heard.

You are probably wondering then how you, as a local board of education member, can have an impact on the law-making process. There are basically three ways for a board member to get involved in Association legislative activities: 1) be appointed as the legislative chairperson on your local board of education, 2) be selected to serve on the NJSBA Legislative Committee, which is comprised of one school board member from each of the 40 legislative districts in the state, 3) serve as your board's representative to the NJSBA Delegate Assembly, which is made up of one board member from each of the 602 school boards in the state.

Local Legislative Chairperson

A good way to get involved is to become a legislative chairperson on your local board. The role of the legislative chairperson is to follow legislative activity which deals with education. I like to think of the local chairperson's role in terms of the 4R's—*Receive, Review, Report* and *Respond.* The legislative chairperson *RECEIVES* all the communications and publications from the NJSBA, *REVIEWS* the material, *REPORTS* to the local board, and *RESPONDS* to calls for action when appropriate. Some of the communications which help the legislative chairperson are *School Board Notes,* a weekly publication containing articles and other information of interest; and *Legislative Day Summary* (blue in color), which includes bills introduced, released from committee, voted on in the Assembly or Senate, or signed into law by the Governor. Another valuable reference tool is the *Legislative Directory,* which is published by the Association annually. The legislative chairperson also receives *Legislative Advisories* (in four distinct colors) with their purpose boldly written across the upper right corner (gray for INFORMATION ONLY, orange for URGENT, and goldenrod for ACTION NEEDED). A pink advisory is sent monthly entitled *Legislative Chairperson's Report.* This advisory, as the title indicates, will facilitate the local chairperson's reporting on a monthly basis to his/her local board of education on significant educational issues.

Legislative Committee

The NJSBA's Legislative Committee is made up of one board member representative and one alternate from each of the 40 legislative districts in the state. These members are selected by the president of the association and serve for a one-year term. The members of the Legislative Committee act as the grass roots lobbyists who organize and communicate with local chairpersons in their legislative districts to set up district meetings. These members also develop an on-going line of communication with the senator and two assemblypersons from the legislative district which he/she represents. The Legislative Committee meets monthly to take positions on legislation thereby guiding the executive director of the Association in terms of support or opposition for specific legislation.

Delegate Assembly

Each local board of education has a delegate to the NJSBA Delegate Assembly which is representative of the 602 school boards in the state. The delegates meet twice a year to discuss and debate resolutions from local boards of education and to hear committee

reports. These resolutions call upon the NJSBA to seek legislation, oppose or amend legislation or to seek changes in the rules and regulations of the State Board of Education. The resolutions are researched by the NJSBA staff and background and recommendations are provided; then all of this information is sent to each delegate prior to the Delegate Assembly. Once the delegates meet, confer, and approve resolutions, the resolutions become NJSBA policy. At that point, NJSBA staff draft legislation to meet the intent of each resolution and lobby the bills through the legislative process.

The Legislative Process

It is extremely important for board members to understand the legislative process. The chart at the end of this article graphically depicts the process, indicating how lobbyists can be effective at every step along the way. NJSBA staff is actively involved in the legislative process and lobbies in support or opposition to significant legislation based on positions taken by the Delegate Assembly. Some of the many activities associated with the promotion of NJSBA legislative goals include testimony at Legislative Committee meetings and hearings, appearances before the State Board of Education, attendance at legislative sessions, meetings with the legislators, governor's staff and other departments of state, and providing assistance to individual legislators on positions and proposed legislation.

Grass Roots Lobbying

The NJSBA lobbyists effectively represent boards of education at the state level; however, the Association is only as credible as the support that is provided at the local level. It is essential that board members communicate with the legislators that represent them. As the publicly elected or appointed official representing the children, as well as the public interest in your community, your input is especially valuable to your legislator. The following are some general guidelines to help interested board members influence education legislation: 1) Read all legislative advisories from NJSBA. They usually contain a description of active bills before the Legislature and often request board members to contact their legislators concerning the proposal. 2) Take the action requested by the Association in the Legislative Advisories, particularly those labeled URGENT or ACTION NEEDED. 3) Send copies of all your correspondence with legislators to the Association. The NJSBA lobbyists will follow up your communications by visiting with the legislators personally at the State House.

Remember, in each Legislative Session, there are a number of significant issues that affect public education. School board members can sit back and let legislation affect their districts or get involved to influence legislation which is in the best interests of the public and the students they serve. The choice is yours!

The Legislative Process & NJSBA

1 NEED: Local school board recognizes a pressing need for NJSBA action and submits a resolution to the Delegate Assembly.

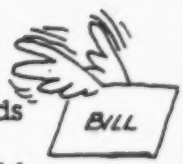
2 BILL DRAFT: If resolution is approved by Delegate Assembly, NJSBA staff researches issue and drafts a bill.

3 SPONSOR: NJSBA's lobbyists request meeting with a legislator they feel will be receptive to the proposed legislation. The legislator introduces the bill either in the Senate or Assembly.

4 REFER TO COMMITTEE: Following introduction, the bill is referred to the appropriate committee by the Speaker of the Assembly or President of the Senate, depending on the house in which the sponsor sits.

5 DISCUSSION: NJSBA works with sponsor and committee chairman to get bill on committee agenda. If bill is a major one, the NJSBA may ask the Committee to hold public hearings at which an Association officer may testify. Lobbyists monitor all meetings of committee to which bill is assigned.

6 RELEASE FROM COMMITTEE: NJSBA staff attends all committee meetings and presents Association viewpoint on the bill, countering arguments from other groups where necessary. After discussion, committee votes to hold or release the bill. If released, the bill automatically receives second reading.



7 FLOOR DEBATE AND VOTE: Now the bill can be posted for floor vote at the discretion of the Speaker of the House or President of the Senate. NJSBA Legislative Network goes into action; local board members contact their legislators—legislators debate and vote.

8 TO SECOND HOUSE: Procedure repeated. If amendments are added, either in committee or on the floor, the bill must go back to the original house for approval of ammendments.

9 TO GOVERNOR FOR SIGNATURE: If bill is approved by both houses, it is sent to the Governor for his signature. Lobbying efforts now focus on the Governor. He has forty-five days in which to act or the bill automatically becomes law.

10 SIGN INTO LAW OR VETO: The Governor may veto the bill ("absolute veto" or "conditional veto"), or sign it into law. If conditionally vetoed, the bill is returned for floor vote in each house to concur with or reject the Governor's amendments or conditions. If both houses concur, the bill becomes law.

The Board And Labor Relations

Dr. Marc Gaswirth,
Labor Relations Department

The school board president has many responsibilities affecting the administrative and financial status of a school district. One of the most time-consuming activities involves labor relations matters, namely, negotiations and contract administration work. The president has certain required tasks in this area, which, if performed properly, will greatly protect the board's vital interests in negotiations and in the daily operations of the school district.

Committee Structure

The president generally has the authority to select the chairpersons and the members of those committees with labor relations duties. Many boards that function on the committee system have two committees to handle these duties. One committee, commonly known as the Personnel Committee, establishes the criteria for the hiring, evaluation, and retention of staff, and reviews the employment decisions of the school administration. This committee is also usually involved in the processing of grievances at the board-level stage of the procedure. The second committee is the Negotiating Committee or Team that works closely with the school administration and, perhaps, a labor relations specialist.

Appointment of Members

The school board president's authority to appoint other board members to standing or ad hoc committees, or to select himself/herself to serve as a permanent, ad hoc member, or chairperson of any board committee, should be set forth in the board's bylaws. Whatever role the board president assumes in labor relations matters will be affected by his/her other commitments and level of expertise. Suffice it to say, the potentially devastating impact that inept negotiations or improper contract administration work will have on the financial and administrative well-being of the district can force the board president to assume a more active role than even he/she may desire.

Should the president's other time commitments be considerable, the president will usually select some board members (never a majority) to serve on each of the two committees cited above. One member, preferably with experience and talent, will be selected to chair each committee. In selecting its bargaining team, a board must recognize that negotiations are often not completed by the date of the board election. The appointment of a completely new bargaining team, at the reorganization of the board, can seriously disturb the board's on-going negotiations. The negotiating team should therefore be initially selected to ensure stability of representation during the continuing negotiations. Appointments of board members who are in their first and second year of their terms can provide continuity to the team and can also provide continuity of labor relations experience on the board.

The board president should select a negotiating team that can work together and that can be supportive of each other's needs and interests. This point must be stressed because the board's team should be representative of the thinking of the entire board concerning negotiations outcomes. Where dissension among the members of the team does arise, the board president may have to mediate in an effort to reconcile different points of view and to maintain a sense of unity and common purpose.

Assistance in Negotiations

The NJSBA, some colleges and universities, and a few private organizations offer conferences on a wide range of labor relations topics. School board presidents should attend as well as encourage other board members to attend these conferences, because

of the constantly changing developments in the field.

Many school boards have recognized the highly complicated and technical nature of public sector labor relations and have decided to hire either a full-time staff member or an outside consultant to handle employee-employer matters. The selection of these professionals may greatly relieve the board of the burden of preparing proposals, developing strategies and tactics, and engaging in verbal jousting with their employees or their representatives. Hiring a professional may initially prove costly; however, the benefits to be gained, in contrast to the mistakes that can be made, must be assessed to determine whether the costs involved are justified. The board president can play an important role in this decision because he/she should best be able to assess whether the district's board members have the necessary skills and talents to perform this important task.

Establishing Guidelines and Priorities

Regardless of who does the actual negotiations, the entire board must establish a tentative framework for settlement, i.e., how much new money can be given, what new contract language can be accepted, what board proposals must appear in the next contract. In addition to establishing negotiations guidelines, consideration must be given to bargaining strategies and tactics, particularly if no professional negotiator is being used. The board president must determine that, although it is desirable to have the entire board participate in the framework for settlement, the matter of deciding strategies and tactics should be left to the negotiating committee; otherwise, the process of choosing how to achieve negotiations objectives may get bogged down in interminable intra-board wrangling.

The board president or the chairperson of the negotiating team must make certain that there is administrative input into the board's proposals and counterproposals. School administrators, including building-level principals and supervisors, are excellent sources of information concerning any practical difficulties that they face under the current contract. The board would be remiss if it did not tap this excellent source of information.

Unified Appearance and Approach

The care taken in deliberating over a framework for an approach to settlement would be wasted if the board does not remain unified during negotiations. This is not to suggest that any opinion which differs from existing board policy should not be privately discussed and considered. However, five or seven or nine board members each sending out different signals about negotiations will seriously damage the board's bargaining position. The public position of a unified board should not be marred by acknowledged private infighting. The confidentiality of this entire area must be protected lest the union take advantage of this dissension. The board president has a special obligation to ensure that negotiations are not undermined by either public or publicized private squabbling among board members.

Authority of the Team

An important matter that should be decided before the first negotiations session concerns who has the authority to ratify the entire contract. Boards have two choices. One is to authorize the negotiating team to negotiate an agreement that is binding on the entire board; the second is more commonly used: the negotiating team is given the responsibility to reach a tentative agreement, *subject to the approval of the entire board.* The board president's role in the latter situation is to help to develop a consensus among board members to support the settlement that the negotiating team has worked out unless

it is clear that the negotiating team has exceeded the guidelines that the board originally established.

This last scenario should not ordinarily happen. The board president should require that the negotiating team give the board periodic updates about the status of negotiations. These regular reports not only should serve to keep school board members informed, but also should move the board toward a consensus once the negotiations are completed. Without the support of at least a majority of the board members, negotiations may never end.

Ratification

On a nine-member board, the negotiating team is usually made up of three members, each with one vote. The board president who appointed the members to the team also has a vote. All that is needed then is one more vote for approval of the negotiated agreement, assuming that the president and all the negotiating team members favor it. Despite the need to obtain the needed majority, the board president should seek, to the extent possible, the support of the greatest number of board members for the proposed contract. A unified public position concerning negotiations conveys the impression of board solidarity, and this appearance should be maintained even after the agreement has been approved.

Public Relations

The public is likely to look to the school board president for negotiations information. A president who is not directly involved in negotiations may give the chairperson of the negotiations team or the chief school administrator the responsibility to communicate with the public about negotiations. Even so, the negotiating team must constantly keep the president informed of the status of negotiations so that any information that he/she may give out will not be misinterpreted or prove counterproductive. Other board members will be kept up to date with the regular negotiations reports previously mentioned.

Public Behavior

Because the board president is the board's chief spokesperson at all public meetings, situations may arise where the local association will use the public meeting to demonstrate its displeasure with the pace of negotiations or with the board's current contract offer. These situations need to be handled delicately, patiently, and prudently. Otherwise, the board may expose any internal differences and damage its public image. Should this occur, the board president should maintain tight control over the conduct of the meeting (particularly in regard to the behavior of other board members). The president should respond to probable union claims that the board is not bargaining in good faith by reiterating the board's reasonableness and desire to negotiate a fair and equitable resolution to all concerned: employees, students, and the public. But the president must strongly emphasize that the board will not discuss publicly matters involving negotiations. Other board members must support this position. The local association will see any intra-board divisiveness as a clear sign of weakness and will seek to exploit it by attempting to appeal to those board members who may appear to be more sympathetic to the teachers' position.

Despite what at times may appear to be a hostile audience, the president or any other board member should avoid angry exchanges with local association members. The local association may use these sharp exchanges in the presence of its membership to its own

advantage by conveying to them that the board is anti-staff, fragmented, and unable to make sound and rational decisions.

The board president assumes a critical role in maintaining board member discipline, however difficult the task. He/she must vigorously stress to his/her colleagues that board solidarity is essential at both public meetings and in any private discussions between individual board members and teachers. Successful negotiations on the board's terms can be seriously jeopardized if the board falls victim to the "divide and conquer" approach.

Crisis Negotiations

Crisis negotiations, i.e., bargaining under the threat of, or during a strike, requires the selection of a board member or a school administrator who is close to negotiations to serve as the principal contact with the mass media. The board president may be the most suitable individual because he/she may be the most well-known board member and the expected leader in crisis situations. In addition, the president generally has the authority to speak for the entire board. During crisis periods, the chairperson of the negotiating team may not have the time to speak to the press. It may also not be desirable to interject a chief school administrator into the public debate. He/she must continue to administer the district, and should avoid the rancor and residual hostility that might result from his/her involvement in the strike. That sometimes leaves the board president as the most appropriate and qualified individual to assume this task. Of course, the president would need the time to devote to this task and the specialized knowledge to effectively represent the board's position.

Contract Administration

Once the contract has been negotiated, the board president should insist upon effective contract administration. The superintendent must make sure that all school administrators having the responsibility to process grievances are capable of handling the task. These administrators, including the superintendent, should be evaluated on their contract administration skills. If these individuals lack certain skills, they should be urged to attend various contract administration programs that the NJSBA and other professional organizations and institutions offer. Hard-fought negotiations gains can evaporate quickly if they are not protected during the life of the agreement.

Summary

The board president plays a significant role in labor relations-related responsibilities. These include: selecting the negotiating team, which will either work alone or with a staff or outside professional; encouraging inservice training of school board negotiators; and using school administrators in the negotiations process. They also involve assisting in the developing of a negotiations framework, including formulating strategies and tactics; stressing the need for board solidarity; delegating authority to conclude a settlement within specified limits subject to the approval of the entire board; helping to develop a consensus for the approval of the tentative agreement; maintaining decorum at public school board meetings; leading the board during crisis negotiations; and ensuring that there is sound contract administration.

Using Your Board Meeting As A District Showcase

Lenore Greenberg

Attendance at your school board meeting is usually light. The public rarely shows interest, and when they do come to your board meetings they are often in a critical or even a belligerent mood.

The news medium seems indifferent to your board meetings, too. Reporters generally focus on the negative and the sensational—and even then, often get their facts wrong. The next morning, as you read the local paper over your morning coffee, you too often find yourself muttering, "Was I at the same meeting?"

Don't despair—administrators and board members across the nation report that you are not alone. Attendance at board meetings, like overall constructive interest in public education, is generally disappointing. Most professional and lay leaders of public education originally became involved in setting school policy because they cared about the quality of education. Yet, like the public and the media, board members and administrators are often heard complaining about being bored at their own board meetings. Many board meetings seem to drone on interminably, mired in the mundane and little time seems to be devoted to basic educational issues, the district's educational programs or kids. If the board members and their professionals are bored, why should the public be eager to spend the evening being bored too?

Perhaps it is time that some real thought was given to planning more interesting board meetings. Some school leaders have been devising new approaches to stimulating public interest by using each board meeting as a district showcase. A review of their creative approaches may spark some valuable ideas for your district.

Board members and their administrators are planning together to attack the problem of uninspiring board meetings in several basic ways by:

- streamlining the business portions of their meetings to cut down on wasted time;
- using their imaginations to create interest and present challenges to themselves and the community at the meetings;
- carefully publicizing their efforts to excite the interest of the community.

For example, during a mini-workshop on the subject at the annual convention of the National School Public Relations Association, a school public relations officer told the group that his district routinely sets aside 15 to 30 minutes of every board meeting for some kind of educational program or "showcase" presentation. Other school districts have chosen to showcase educational programs during special board meetings, specifically arranged for that purpose and conducted in addition to their regular board meetings.

Each approach has its benefits (and every school district must devise the approach which serves its own needs best). However, the first approach—that of incorporating showcase events into regular meetings—has one additional benefit. Audiences are exposed, if only briefly, to some of the demanding responsibilities with which the board must deal routinely.

So, let us first look at some of the activities which boards around the nation have included within their regularly scheduled meetings—activities which do not need to take up more than 30 precious minutes of meeting time.

A favorite in this category seems to be a program which recognizes the outstanding achievements and contributions of students. These successes could be in any field from athletics to academics—such as winning a math meet, a spelling bee or a cooking competition. Students are invited to attend the regular board meeting where they are presented with an award to honor their achievements. The awards need not be expensive. They can be trophies, plaques or even simple certificates printed in large quantity with space to fill in the details. The significance of the event is expressed in the personal warmth and interest shown by board members and administrators through these awards.

and the resulting appreciation of the parents, friends and relatives who attend the board meeting.

One key to success for this type of showcase event, however, is informing and inviting parents, friends and relatives of the students to be honored well in advance of the meeting. A very successful technique developed by one school district involves the teacher or coach who is responsible for a student's achievement. That professional initially informs the board of the student's success and recommends recognition. When an award is approved, the professional writes or calls the family and informs the student. Then the teacher or coach receives well-deserved recognition too, as he or she introduces the award winner at the board meeting and explains the achievement involved.

A similar approach is used by some school districts to recognize the achievements of staff members. Commendations can be awarded to such staffers at board meetings, with family and colleagues invited, the press informed, and the supervisor presenting the award and explaining the achievement. It's not only good PR and human relations—it's a great staff morale builder, too.

Some districts go beyond recognizing competitive achievements. They also showcase students and staff who make outstanding contributions or who render outstanding service to their district.

Staff members can be featured for a wide variety of other reasons as well. For example, new personnel should be introduced to the public at a board meeting, with resumes and photos provided to the media. Old-timers can be acknowledged for anniversaries of employment or upon their retirement. In such cases a certificate might be supplemented or supplanted by a gift or an informal reception held after the meeting.

One information officer developed a concept called the "Good News Corner." At each board meeting this 'corner' features a changing display of student work. Consider setting up a "Good News Corner" for your board and taking a few brief moments of the board meeting to introduce the students and staff responsible for the work.

Recognition can also be the major theme of a separate, special meeting of the board. A district superintendent describes one particularly pleasant tradition of her district. Each spring the board schedules a special meeting and reception to honor all community volunteers who helped the school district in any way during the school year. She reports that this event is a highlight of the school year, looked forward to with pleasure by all concerned.

Another school district scheduled a special showcase event and invited all senior citizens. The program featured adult education offerings of special interest to these citizens and reviewed school volunteer programs which might intrigue them. They also received a list of upcoming school events which they might particularly enjoy, and a "Golden Pass" to attend these events without charge. (A fine showcase event such as this one could even earn you many "yes" votes on your next bond issue or budget referendum.)

Your creativity need not be limited to the recognition theme, however. Let's think back for a moment to that original commitment of educational leaders and their basic desire to improve the quality of education. How about focusing the spotlight of your board meeting upon some of the basic issues and concepts of education?

Staff members might enjoy preparing presentations that focus on major educational issues. Consider also a variation on that theme and schedule a debate, or a speaker from outside the district who is an acknowledged authority on the subject. You might also follow up with a discussion panel featuring a board member, an administrator, a student, a representative of the community-at-large, and the speaker. Open up the discussion to the audience and watch the interaction and interest grow—no one will doze through this meeting!

Or you could invite staff members to showcase an outstanding educational program within the district, perhaps one that the board has supported generously. This approach introduces the human element into educational accountability.

Has your board appointed an ad hoc committee to research and develop a set of recommendations on some major educational question? If so, why not stimulate press and public interest in the issue as one district does—by setting up a special meeting at which the committee will report back publicly to the board. Do be sure to follow two recommendations, however. First, provide the committee with staff assistance so the program proceeds in an orderly and interesting manner, gratifying to the committee, rather than embarrassing to its members. Second, be sure that both the committee and the public understand from the outset that the recommendations will be carefully considered, but that the ultimate decision must remain the responsibility of the board.

One administrator reports that his board sets up a special meeting each year during which it receives reports from the parent/teacher organization of each school. This annual event, to which all parents in the district are invited, permits each parent/teacher organization to review its activities for the past year and preview its plans for the coming year. Similar opportunities could be provided for other community organizations which are specifically devoted to supporting your schools—groups such as band or athletic booster clubs. Board members and the public will be interested to learn about their functions, and the organizations might pick up additional members as well as recognition.

In a similar vein, you might consider shining your showcase spotlight on the staff of a specific department within your district, such as the librarians or the science teachers. A broad overview of the curriculum of a single discipline can be fascinating and revealing. One district explores curriculum by means of slide shows developed by the staff, and calls them "Curriculum Capsules."

Another district has found great success with a broad-based orientation program. The first meeting following this board's annual reorganization meeting is devoted to an orientation session geared not only to new members of the school board, but also to new residents of the community. Invitations are sent to all new residents and the program spotlights both the district and the responsibilities of the board of education.

You might also consider varying the theme of a large city school board which holds an annual dinner for the press. Board members and administrators plan and host a dinner of cafeteria food in the faculty lounge of a school building. The event is inexpensive and informal, but a fine opportunity to mix with reporters, who are also invited to remain afterward for the public board meeting.

Of course, the most effective spotlight programs of all will be the ones that feature kids, kids, kids. You know that the classrooms, gyms and auditoriums of your schools are filled with exciting activities and learning experiences—but do your public and media know it? Why not take advantage of all that youthful enthusiasm, and at the same time add still a little more zest for the students and staff by scheduling occasional repeat performances of plays, concerts, demonstrations and exhibits at your board meetings. Even if they have to be mini-versions due to time limits, such performances can demonstrate the learning and achievements of the students and bring to both board members and the public a flavor of the good things happening in their schools.

Whatever your choice of format, for more successful showcase programs during board meetings, consider these questions:

- Are your meetings held in a well-ventilated, well-lighted room?
- Is the usual location central to your community?
- Do you schedule occasional meetings in varied neighborhoods?
- Is there adequate parking?

- Are there ashtrays if you permit smoking?
- Is there a coffee break?
- Are board members identified by means of easily legible name plates?
- Are members of the audience asked to identify themselves before speaking and then accorded complete attention?
- Can the public, news medium and board easily see and hear each other?

Your thoughtfulness on these matters will encourage the public to attend by making their visits more rewarding.

Remember that people are central to your success—the people who attend the board meetings as well as the people who plan and implement your programs. The more people invited to bask in the warmth of your showcase spotlight, the larger the number of friends and relatives who will attend your board meetings. Many of these visitors will be residents of your community who would otherwise be unlikely to attend a meeting of your local board of education.

Consider these guidelines for using your board meeting as a district showcase:

- Use caution—based upon the experiences of other boards, unless these showcase programs are adequately planned and carefully implemented, they can spell disaster. Recognize from the start that they will require not only board and administrative commitment, but staff interest and time. Standards must be set high from the outset. Programs must proceed smoothly and be limited to the amount of time designated—and jargon must be avoided.
- Encourage public participation. One district routinely builds in time for public comment or questions even though their programs span only a 30-minute period during the regular board meeting. They also have the individuals involved in the evening's presentation available to the press at the conclusion of the meeting, or if that will be too late in the evening for youngsters, during a recess in the meeting.
- Schedule showcase events carefully and often enough to establish them as interesting and worthwhile community events, but not so often that they become humdrum and routine.
- Ask local organizations such as the League of Women Voters, a taxpayers' association, or the Chamber of Commerce to send representatives to your board meetings. If so, you might emulate one district which has convinced two such groups to carry columns in their monthly newsletters focusing on the events of the last board of education meeting. In each case, the organization's representative writes the column about the special presentations of the staff and students, as well as board business.
- Send special invitations to officials of organizations who may be interested in a specific program. In one case, for example, a representative of the local historical society attended a board meeting showcase which featured historical models and diaramas made by students. The history buff was so impressed that he asked the teacher to repeat the presentation before the historical society meeting. Students and teachers complied proudly, with points earned on all sides. There should be no reason why outstanding showcase programs can't also travel to the local nursing home or the regional shopping mall.
- Try a positive, supportive approach to the news medium. Provide them with agendas, special reports and background materials that are not of a confidential nature, and let them know about showcase programs in advance. Set up a well-lighted press table and assign a knowledgeable professional to serve as a resource person to the reporters—before, during and after each meeting. Consider a press briefing before the

meeting when appropriate or a press conference with officials or program participants after the meeting. Be sure that all reporters know which individual serves as your district's spokesperson and that they have been supplied with the person's day and evening telephone numbers. Contact the local broadcast medium after each board meeting with a report. Anticipate the needs of the press by providing them with prompt clarification and information, and you should reap the rewards of more accurate coverage.

- Make the public feel wanted and comfortable. Develop a flyer which carefully explains the format of your board meetings with a clear indication of just when the public is invited to comment.
- Supply visitors with the agenda for the evening, background information, and possibly a postcard for feedback on the meeting and/or the schools.
- Establish and follow procedures. These should not be just formalities, but a useful framework for order.
- Keep an accurate record of your meetings and respond to all audience inquiries, even if you have to report back after conducting research or an investigation.

Designing The Program: Goals, Objectives And Procedures

NOTE: New monitoring criteria developed by the State Board of Education includes the establishment of ongoing school-community relations efforts. The following steps might be considered in developing a year-round communications program.

Define Your Goals

The first move in instituting any public relations program is to establish the objectives of your school district. What do you hope to achieve through better communications? The objectives of the PR program are necessarily both long and short-range and should, therefore, be so expressed.

Broadly speaking, the overall goal of any program is to establish a favorable climate in which to operate the schools. A good example of long-range objectives is the following list drawn up by a New Jersey school district:

1. To promote public interest and participation in the operation of the school system.
2. To gather public attitudes and reactions about the school system and report them to the superintendent and the board.
3. To provide an honest, continuous, comprehensive flow of information about the policies, procedures, programs, problems, and progress of the school system to the community and the staff.
4. To develop the most effective means of communication with each of the school system's publics and to use all available media.
5. To develop programs in the district and in the individual schools that will integrate home, school, and community in meeting the needs of the children in the schools.
6. To develop and maintain the confidence of the community in the school board and the school staff.
7. To develop a climate that attracts good teachers and encourages the staff to strive for excellence in the educational program.
8. To anticipate and forestall problems that are brought about by lack of understanding.
9. To evaluate past procedures in order to make improvements in future communications procedures.

Short-range goals Goals to guide a program for a particular year or the near term—must be stated more specifically. A list of short-range objectives might include:

1. To secure voter approval of a bond referendum for a new school.
2. To gain parental acceptance of a complete overhaul of the curriculum in the junior high schools.
3. To win public acceptance of an alternative high school.
4. To marshal support for a differentiated staffing system.
5. To overcome misunderstanding between Hispanic citizens and the school community.

And, since all things change—including education—objectives should frequently be reviewed and restated, when necessary, in light of changing conditions or changing public aspirations. But whatever your purposes, they should be clearly delineated and put into writing as a constant guide and reference for the communications team.

Identify Your Publics

Next, determine with whom you need to communicate in order to attain your objectives. Who are your publics? Which groups should be on the receiving end of all school communications? Which groups should be contacted only for special purposes?

Which publics can usually be counted upon to support school system goals? Which often try to block your efforts? Where should special effort be concentrated—for the long term? For the short term?

Again, make lists. A list of publics should include:

(a) parents
(b) senior citizens
(c) influential citizens
(d) business and industry leaders
(e) ethnic leaders
(f) religious leaders
(g) government officials
(h) school employees [and their organizations]
(i) students
(j) members of fraternal and civic groups
(k) union officials
(l) property owners and
(m) women's groups.

No doubt, you can add your own special publics.

Never overlook school employees and students—they can be the most effective ambassadors between the schools and the public. Far too often their support is taken for granted or they are uninformed as to the district's philosophy and goals.

Plan Your Strategies

Now is the time to decide how you will conduct your public relations program. Remember that your overall goal is to establish a favorable climate in which to operate the schools. This means your communications program must be much more than the issuance of an occasional press release, the dissemination of a building brochure or publication of an annual report. Public relations means people, thus it means communicating *with* people, using every known technique and thinking up new ones. It means providing for interaction—for exchange of ideas between the educational leadership and its publics. Successful PR programs are seldom "one-shot" efforts. Good will toward the schools no longer "just happens." It must be built up by continuous, constant effort to inform the public and to "level" with the public. It is the end result of careful information gathering and sensitivity to public, employee and student attitudes. Your program must be planned, it must be systematic, it must be continuous.

To attain near-term objectives, you must decide how you can best reach the publics you have identified. A broad understandng of people—of how they act and react—is needed here. And it should be remembered that people may act in one way as individuals, but quite differently as members of a group.

A technique or medium that is useful for reaching one group may not do for others. Some of your efforts (the district newsletter, for example) can be designed for everyone: others should be geared to a specific group or groups.

If senior citizens in your district have been mainly responsible for bond referendum defeats, a special campaign to convert them into friends of the schools is indicated. A projected work-study program would, of course, require the support of business and industry leaders. Your drug prevention program won't stand a chance unless you first sell it to student leaders. (And student leaders aren't necessarily the student council

officers, they're the kids that the other kids look up to and follow.) You can't successfully institute a differentiated staffing program without first convincing your teachers that it's right for them and for the school.

Any plan you structure for reaching the publics you have identified should include not only procedures for ongoing, day-after-day communications, but also strategies to meet crisis and special situations. It should comprise formal as well as informal methods of communication, public and private media.

And, because so many traditional methods of communication have lost their effectiveness or credibility, new ways to communicate must be sought. Even though reliable studies in recent years indicate that most people look to the newspapers as their chief source of information about the schools, it has been found that the average news item gets only about 12 percent readership. Furthermore, the information offered may be incomplete or may omit what the schools are most anxious to communicate. Some newspapers concentrate on sports news or, even worse, dwell almost exclusively on negative occurances, such as discipline problems, and give little space to curriculum, new educational programs, or other positive happenings.

Besides, don't think that a communications program consists only of printed or published material. Face-to-face contact can be very powerful in molding public attitudes toward the schools.

Be flexible. Try to innovate. Seek new methods and outlets for communication. Bear in mind that there are no hard and fast rules, there is no single or standardized method of successful communication. Whatever your program, ensure that it can be adapted to a particular need at a particular time.

Particularly, don't wait for your publics to come to you. Reach out to the people in your district. Supply speakers to community groups and civic organizations. Encourage school administration and staff to join such groups. Establish advisory committees, fact-finding and research groups through which citizens can be meaningfully involved in school problems and issues. Invite citizens with special knowledge or ability to serve as resource people in your schools. Citizens can help to select instructional materials, can review the school grading and reporting system, can be called upon to supply suggestions for improving the school lunch program or to upgrade the art, physical education and foreign language programs in your schools.

Ensure that visitors to your schools are treated with warmth and courtesy, and that requests or complaints are handled graciously and expeditiously. Make parent visitation days pleasant and interesting experiences.

Remember, everything that is said and everything that is done in your schools can either add to or detract from your relationship with the public.

Suggested Statement Of Policy On School-Community Relations

1. The board of education accepts full responsibility for keeping the residents of the community informed about the function and operation of the school system.
2. The school system will endeavor to ascertain the attitudes of the public and the personnel employed by the schools with regard to particular aspects of its operation prior to planning new procedures.
3. The board of education encourages citizen participation in planning for the excellence of their schools. The board will seek means of encouraging citizens to learn more about the schools, and will assist parents and other citizens who are interested in promoting education by means of study and discussion groups and other programs that require board or administrative expertise or guidance in their implementation.
4. In using the advice and assistance of interested individuals and groups, the board in no way abdicates its responsibility to the citizens of the district as the official body charged with the responsibility for making the final decision on all matters pertaining to the educational program within the district.
5. All decisions of the board of education will be made in public meeting.
6. The school system's communication program shall be an integral part of the district's total educational program and shall evolve from the activities conducted within the total program. The program shall be honest, continuous, and as comprehensive as possible. The program shall involve the board of education, all school personnel, and all persons in the community.
7. The board recognizes the importance of keeping all employees of the district informed of school policies in order to enable them to understand the school program. All employees should be made aware of their role as representatives of the school district.
8. The board of education recognizes the capital investment that the community has in school buildings and facilities, and believes that such buildings and facilities should be used for legitimate community purposes.
9. The program of public relations shall be the direct responsibility of the superintendent of schools and his staff, under whose direction the program shall function with the guidance of the policies of the board of education.

Suggested Objectives For A Public Relations Program

1. To promote public interest and participation in the operation of the school system.
2. To gather public attitudes and reactions about the school system and report them to the superintendent and the board.
3. To provide an honest, continuous, comprehensive flow of information about the policies, procedures, programs, problems, and progress of the school system to the community and the staff.
4. To develop the most effective means of communication with each of the school system's publics and to use all available media.
5. To develop programs in the district and in the individual schools that will integrate home, school, and community in meeting the needs of the children in the schools.
6. To develop and maintain the community's confidence in the school system.
7. To develop a climate that attracts good teachers, and encourages the staff to strive for excellence.
8. To anticipate and forestall problems that are brought about by lack of understanding.
9. To evaluate past procedures in order to make improvements in future communications procedures.

Suggested Procedures For Developing A Public Relations Program

1. Formulate and adopt a written policy.
2. Identify the publics within the community.
3. Identify the problems that must be met:
   - List the obvious problems (those that are currently recognized).
   - Query selected staff members in order to find out what they consider to be the problems.
   - Query a selected sampling of the various publics by means of a questionnaire.
   - Make random telephone inquiries to ascertain what people want to know about the schools.
   - Pass out cards at every school gathering for people to write down what they want to know.
4. Define the objectives of the program.
5. Decide the best means for reaching each of these objectives.
6. Decide how much money is available for the program—in addition to and including printing.
7. Assign individual responsibilities to staff members.
8. Assign responsibility for coordinating activities.
9. Let everyone know who is responsible for every part of the program, and arrange to let everyone know what everyone else is doing throughout the year in carrying on the program. Use workshops, inservice, panels, and internal publications.
10. Draw up the plan by activity, by date, and responsible individual.
11. Develop future plans.

Dealing With The Press During A Crisis

Public relations specialists recommend the following:

EXPRESS SYMPATHY. When the crisis has resulted in deaths or injuries, first express your sympathy and concern for the victims and their families.

AVOID SAYING "NO COMMENT." This suggests that you have something to hide. Instead, say that you don't have enough information to comment and that you will get back to the reporter later. And then be sure you or someone you designate does get back to that reporter.

DON'T SPECULATE. If you don't know something, admit it. In particular, be careful not to speculate on the cause of the crisis or the extent of the casualties or damage.

DON'T BLAME ANYONE FOR ANYTHING.

BE STRAIGHTFORWARD WHEN ANSWERING QUESTIONS. If you attempt to mislead a good reporter, the reporter is likely to discover your deception when double-checking the facts with another source. Your credibility as a source will be ruined.

DON'T SPEAK OFF THE RECORD. If you don't want to be quoted on a particular subject, don't say anything about it.

DON'T MAKE AD-LIB COMMENTS. They may be reported out of context.

EMPHASIZE THE GOOD RECORD OF YOUR DISTRICT. If precautions were taken to avoid the crisis, point them out.

DON'T REPEAT NEGATIVE QUESTIONS OR MISLEADING WORDS. If you repeat them in your response, they may be attributed to you.

CORRECT INACCURACIES. If incorrect information has appeared in the news medium, be sure that you point it out.

DON'T ARGUE WITH A REPORTER, EVEN WHEN PROVOKED. You will invariably end up making yourself look bad in print.

From Association Management Magazine; March, 1983.

The NJSBA Field Services Department

Direct service is provided to local boards of education by the Field Services Department. This decentralized assistance, as needed, originates from easy-to-reach field offices scattered around the state and staffed by Association Field Service Representatives (FSRs).

Following is a listing of the office sites and counties served from each location:

Denville Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union and Warren

Marlboro Middlesex, Monmouth and Ocean. Urban Boards are also serviced out of this office.

Hammonton Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem

Trenton Hunterdon and Mercer

Local boards of education can get immediate help with various problems by contacting the field office which serves them. Onsite assistance will be provided by the FSR in such areas as legal questions, labor relations issues, legislative information, communications assistance, inservice training, or any aspect of school operations.

Association FSRs can also be relied upon to help plan meetings, provide speakers, develop liaison with other educational organizations, or enhance board members' understanding of the role to be played by local boards of education in the educational affairs of New Jersey.

Your first thought when you need assistance with local board problems, advice or reassurance should be to contact your FSR . . . your guarantee to full use of services available from your New Jersey School Boards Association!